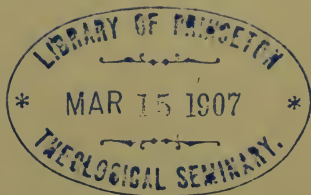
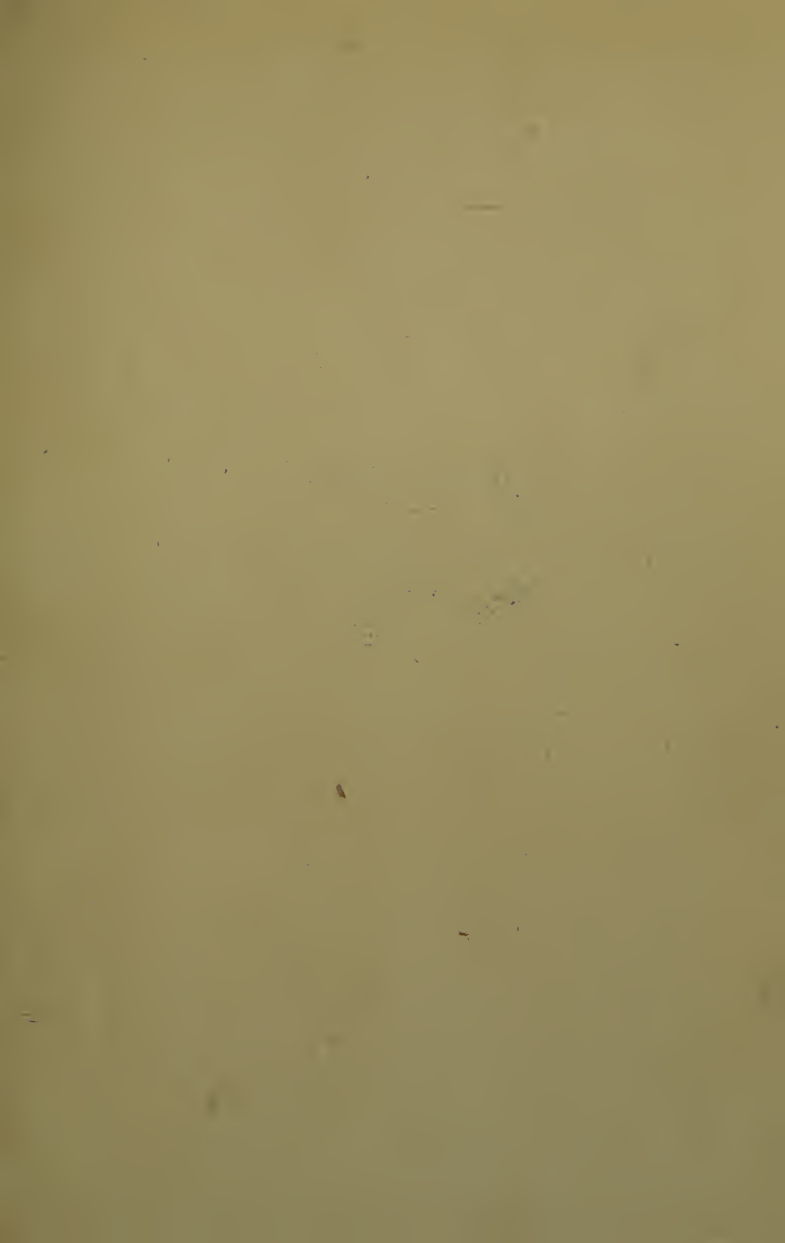


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THE FOURTH GOSPEL
AND SOME
RECENT GERMAN CRITICISM

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE,

C. F. CLAY, MANAGER.

London: FETTER LANE, E.C.

Glasgow: 50, WELLINGTON STREET.



Leipzig: F. A. BROCKHAUS.

New York: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS.

Bombay and Calcutta: MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

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THE FOURTH GOSPEL
AND SOME
RECENT GERMAN CRITICISM

BY

HENRY LATIMER JACKSON, B.D.

VICAR OF ST MARY'S WITH ST BENEDICT'S, HUNTINGDON

CAMBRIDGE :
at the University Press
1906

Volat avis sine meta
Quo nec vates, nec propheta
Evolavit altius :
Tam implenda, quam impleta
Nunquam vidit tot secreta
Purus homo purius.

Thesaurus Hymnologicus.

PREFACE.

I MAY be allowed, perhaps, to say a word or two as to the origin and existence of a book which, as it seems to me, has few if any claims to rank as a contribution to what Soltau speaks of as “das Hauptproblem aller Bibel-Kritik.”

It was urged but the other day that, if the clergy cannot all be profound scholars and theologians, they are at any rate pledged to be “a learned and a learning body.” If it is not presumptuous to say so, I have at least tried to be the student, the learner:—not simply “mine own self to gratifie,” but as mindful of the demands made by the ministry of teaching. Desirous of kindling a deeper interest in the study of Holy Scripture amongst those to whom, here and elsewhere, I have been called to minister I have, for a good many years, included regular and systematic lecturing on topics connected with the “Divine Library” in the ordinary routine of parochial work—not disguising the fact that, if there be those who, as Soltau complains, “deem it inexpedient that the results of Biblical

criticism should be communicated to wider circles," I would not willingly be numbered with them. A time came when, having treated at some length of the Gospels generally, I was prompted to resume some closer study of the Fourth Gospel (the "Schmerzenskind der Theologie" of Pfeleiderer) for my own purposes and with the view of attempting some fuller discussion of the subject with those who, if few in number, have proved themselves intelligent and attentive hearers.

In short, availing myself of material already collected and embarking on fresh studies which are still occupying all the leisure at command, I combined work for my own ends with the preparation of a course of lectures which were delivered on the Sunday afternoons of last winter.

The results of my work have now been prepared for publication. That the lectures in question lie behind the printed pages will be, perhaps, evident from the somewhat colloquial style which has been adhered to; they are not, of course, merely reproduced. Apart from attempts to improve on the spoken word, there has been re-arrangement of matter, expansion and condensation. Much has been added on; and the additions go far beyond the references and quotations which have been given in foot-notes or embodied in the text. As might be expected, I have drawn largely on the works of English theologians. More numerous, however, are my gleanings from the literature on the

Johannine question which comes to us from abroad; from many a continental student and scholar of acknowledged eminence. In particular I have consulted German writers—not by any means confining myself to recent publications only; and it will be remarked that two of them have to some extent determined the lines on which my subject has been worked out.

Let me say here that, unfortunately, Professor Schmiedel's important contributions to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher* (*Das vierte Evangelium*, and *Evangelium, Briefe und Offenbarung des Johannes*) did not come to hand until my book was practically finished.

It remains that I should acknowledge a large debt of gratitude. If I have repeatedly turned to Germany for help—not always, I fear, accepting guidance—the reason shall point to early associations, to what I would gladly think of as lasting ties with German friends whose unvarying and warm-hearted kindness makes me look on the "Fatherland" as a second home. There are others, in the nearer home, to whom thanks must be tendered. Of one who is to me as a brother it shall suffice to say that he knows how I value the encouragement which has ever come from him. Two shall be mentioned by name:—my old friend the Rev. E. Harris, D.D., Vicar of Bullinghope, Hereford, who was good enough to read my work in its unrevised

stage; a more recent friend, the Rev. G. R. Holt Shafto, Wesleyan minister, late of Huntingdon and now of Exeter, who helped me greatly in preparing it for the press. It goes without saying that they are in no way committed to an agreement with its contents.

Here the thought occurs to me that, as time goes on, I shall probably realise even more than I do now its many deficiencies and defects, and be glad to claim liberty to disagree with myself.

ST MARY'S VICARAGE, HUNTINGDON,
October, 1906.

P.S. I must plead guilty to an oversight on p. 29. It should have been owned in the text or footnote reference that a liberty had been taken with borrowed words. If Professor Schmiedel will "concur in the judgment of Strauss" he expressly says of ch. xxi that "it does not come from the same author with the rest of the book."

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NOTE.

It will be understood that whenever the title of a foreign work quoted is given in English the reference is to the English translation. There are two instances, however, in which the title is the same in English as in German—the *Jesus* of Arno Neumann and the *Jesus* of Professor Bousset. In the former case the reference is to the translation, in the latter to the original work.

INTRODUCTORY.

“AFTER eighteen centuries of Christianity it is time to go back to Christ!”

The words are those of a great German thinker. To examine into the circumstances and conditions of his period (the 18th century) would fill more pages than can be spared; some, at least, of its characteristic features are at once suggested by his pregnant utterance. It evidently voices deep dissatisfaction with then current presentations of religious truth. As evidently it voices a conviction that there must be a return to first principles; that there should be a harking-back not only to the teaching of Christ, but to the very Christ Himself. There is an anticipation of the thought to which a later writer (Vinet) gave forcible expression: “even now, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, we may be involved in some tremendous error, of which the Christianity of the future will make us ashamed.”

Is it not true that what was said a hundred years ago and more, said some sixty years ago, is being said again to-day—said, indeed, in diverse fashion, but said with an emphasis which is unmistakable? The “tremendous error” is suspected; the cry is heard:

“after *nineteen* centuries of Christianity it is time to go back to Christ.” There is no blinding ourselves to the fact that an “old order” has changed, is changing. The “New Learning” of our age has antiquated beliefs and opinions which met with unquestioning acceptance in a still recent past. “It is a truism to say that in these days we have to reckon with a combination of new studies, with new methods and new results of study¹”; we have also to reckon with one of the consequences, with widespread unsettlement, perplexity, in the sphere of religious thought and action. Old embodiments have ceased to satisfy; and for many the new embodiments are not yet found. Our age is, indeed, “one of religious eclipse²”; in the case of many thoughtful people there is a marked withdrawal from Church life: and even where the habit of church-going is retained there is often a dreary sense of uncertainty, of loss. To turn to the uneducated masses is to become speedily aware, not only of a dogged aloofness from the Church, but also of scoffings at the verities of the faith³.

We remark a dissatisfaction which is displayed in a variety of ways. There is another thing to be noted: an eagerness for the undiscovered something to replace that which has ceased to satisfy; and because, rightly or

¹ Chase, *Supernatural Elements in Our Lord's Earthly Life*, p. 4.

² Goldwin Smith, *In Quest of Light*, p. 39.

³ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien, ihre Quellen und ihr Quellenwerth*, p. 2.

wrongly, it is deemed outworn, obsolete. For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear there are signs numberless of an often pathetic "craving after dogmatic views and conceptions which rest on a firmer basis than the Catechism-erudition of an older theology, after presentations of religion which shall harmonise with modern thought¹." It might be said again to-day: "at the present moment two things about the Christian religion must surely be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is²." "They cannot do without it"!—beyond question the need of it is realised, the deep consciousness of the need finds repeated utterance. Matters of religious import are for ever in debate; in the converse of friends, in the magazine and newspaper. "Of the making of many books" on religious topics "there is no end," and they find multitudes of intelligent and earnest readers. Unbelief, aloofness from Church life, hostility to the Church, there may be; there are also signs and tokens manifold which make it clear "that the great body of mankind will not long live without a faith³."

One thing shines out from amidst all the confusion and the controversy, and it is this: "the Man Christ Jesus" retains His ascendancy over the hearts of men.

¹ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien, ihre Quellen und ihr Quellenwerth*, p. 2.

² M. Arnold, *God and the Bible*, p. xiv.

³ Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 6.

“It is time to go back to Christ”; again we remark a cry which sounds out now faintly and now loud to shrillness, often from unexpected quarters¹. True, indeed, that “the life of Christ has yet to be written²”; those we possess may well be deemed inadequate, but, such as they are, they are turned to with absorbing interest. If a novel treats of Him its circulation is immense. Why is it, we ask, that one should want to force his mind to answer the question, “what have I come to think of Christ³”?—an explanation comes to us in the following words: “the question, Who was Jesus? is forcing itself on the men of our day far more than in any previous age. Amid the crumbling of old forms and institutions, when that new order is dawning for which each one hopes but none may discern clearly, the gaze is rivetted on Jesus with an intensity hitherto unknown. That precisely at this juncture He has some word for us, that we precisely now have need of Him, is not so much a clear perception as a feeling which overwhelms the soul⁴.”

¹ That “three cheers for Jesus of Nazareth!” was the shout raised not so long ago by London secularists is significant. Speaking of the German artisan Göhre (*Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter und Kandidat der Theologie*, ch. vi.) remarks: “One thing alone is left to them—respect and reverence for Jesus Christ.”

² Jowett.

³ *Diary of a Church-goer*, p. 74.

⁴ Wernle, *Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu*, p. 1. Westermann (*Was ist uns Jesus? Zeitschr. für Theol. und Kirche*, xv. 1905, p. 523) says truly: “So wie in unserer Zeit hat noch wohl kein Jahrhundert

“It is time to go back to Christ.” Thus far thoughts have been mainly of yearnings and convictions which, focussed on the “Founder of Christianity,” are noticeable in the ordinary walks of life—among the uneducated classes—in thoughtful minds which have neither the knowledge nor the power to grapple with problems which they see fraught with tremendous issues. There is an implied demand for help and guidance. Remark now that it is being responded to, if diversely and in sometimes discordant notes. As a matter of fact the same problems have long been claiming and receiving the attention of the specialist. Scholars have been, and still are, labouring patiently in the wide field of Bible study. Their unremitting toil, the works which come from them, discussing from different standpoints questions relating to the Christian religion in its rise and origin, may be conceived of as response to “the desire of Christendom for the fullest and most exact knowledge possible of the historic life and ministry of Jesus¹.” The duty laid in particular on our age is that of fearless but reverent investigation into sources; and there are certainly numbers seeking to discharge it. It may generally be said of them that they are characterised by deep seriousness, a transparent honesty of purpose.

sich mit Jesus beschäftigt.” And see Seeberg’s *Die Person Christi der feste Punct im fliessenden Strom der Gegenwart* (*Neue Kirchl. Zeitung*, xiv. 1903, pp. 437 ff.), “Es ist ein Mann, auf den sich aller Blicke richten.”

¹ Wendt, *St John’s Gospel*, p. 1.

One and all they are concerned to get down to facts; and so to prepare the way for a constructive theology to come in due time¹.

A word or two here as to the way in which Biblical scholars, responsive to "the desire of Christendom," prosecute their labours. It has been said already that "in these days we have to reckon with a combination of new studies, with new methods, and new results of study": it may be added that "the study of the past has become a science." The student is no longer "content to glean from early records a picturesque or a majestic story"; he "has a more precise aim and follows more precise methods; he analyses his authorities, compares them, weighs them in the balances of his critical judgement," will "estimate...the real worth of the accounts which have come down to him. Chronicles become documents which he has to interpret, to reduce to their original elements of fact and romance." "Truth is the one only thing which it is his business to discover and present." Rigid indeed is his method of historical enquiry; he works on in the "belief that in the end there will come a great reward in pure and trustworthy knowledge." Of such sort are his methods and his aim when the question turns on the secular literature of

¹ It might be an apt rejoinder to a recent criticism of the Cambridge Divinity Professors (in the *Church Quarterly Review*) to say that they are but shewing themselves alive to present needs and present duty.

a remote past. Precisely similar are they when his research is into that collection of ancient sacred writings which forms the "Divine Library" of the Old and New Testaments, in other words, the Bible. And it was "inevitable" that it should be so. As inevitable was it that the time should come when attention, hitherto mainly centred on the Old Testament, should turn to the New Testament and the problems raised by it; in particular to the records of the Life of Jesus. If writings which tell of His teaching, His earthly ministry, His Person, be to-day subject of critical inquiry, the explanation is that "Christianity is a historical religion," and as such distinctly challenges historical investigation¹.

What should be our attitude in regard to all this research on rigidly scientific principles which, concerned with the sources of our information about Jesus, is so suggestive of yearnings to "go back to Christ," of earnest effort to satisfy these yearnings?

Perhaps some are conscious of timorous shrinkings, of demur; if so, the reminder may be ventured that the religion professed is scarce worth professing if it will not stand the test of examination in the clear light of day. Others, may be, imagine that to criticise is necessarily to reject²; if so they should dwell on the

¹ Cf. Chase, *Supernatural Elements*, pp. 4-6.

² As appeared from the recent voluminous correspondence in the *Standard and Daily Telegraph*.

fact that if on some points we have had to modify beliefs and opinions, there has been very real gain to compensate for the loss of what was after all "ready to vanish away." Changed are our conceptions as to the Creation-stories; they still speak to us, and more intelligibly, of Deity. The Book of Jonah is no longer the happy hunting-ground for Free-thought lecturers, for it is now recognised as the allegory serving as vehicle of spiritual truth. If doubt be still entertained as to some of the writings traditionally assigned to St Paul¹, there is a consensus of opinion that the four great Epistles (Rom., I. and II. Cor., Gal.) do really come from him, and they contain all the essentials of the Christian faith. There has come to us, in short, release from many a moral difficulty; encouragement to expect larger developments of the truth with added knowledge.

This critical investigation, then, is not something to be dreaded. Hinder it we cannot, for it is inevitable; better to acquiesce in it and allow its reasonableness.

¹ Wrede (*Paulus*, pp. 2 ff.) accepts eight Epistles as genuine, and speaks of the view, which obtains in Holland and to a limited extent in Germany, that all the Pauline Epistles belong to a later date, as "eine schwere Verirrung der Kritik." Vischer (*Die Paulusbriefe*, pp. 67 ff.) is disposed to accept more than eight. It is held that criticism has practically established the Pauline authorship of Ephesians; objections deemed weighty being robbed of force by the circumstance that the words "in Ephesus" are no part of the original text.

Still better to welcome it; as realising that, if the results be sometimes the removal of old landmarks, they have again and again brought more assurance as to the trustworthiness of what is contained in the Holy Scriptures¹. And the welcome given to Old Testament criticism should be ungrudgingly extended to that of the New Testament; "Biblical criticism has been admitted into the Church; let Churchmen recognise it as one of God's gifts, and make the most of it²." Let us be ready to "make the most of it" in its application to the records of the Life of Jesus. "Instead of using the Gospels to foreclose inquiry, we must use the results of inquiry to interpret the Gospels. Let inquiry proceed; the light shall help us, as we reverently welcome and use it. We shall not accept every new hypothesis as bringing the light of truth. We shall test the hypotheses with a rigorous scrutiny; or, if we cannot test them ourselves, we shall wait till others whom we trust have tested them. We shall accept for our guidance the considered verdict of the ablest and most devout of the scholars of the Christian Church. We shall ask them to be honest, fearless, and grave, well weighing their responsibility to guide those who cannot undertake the inquiry for themselves³."

¹ Cf. *Fourth Visitation Charge of Alwyne, Bishop of Ely*, p. 8.

² Cheyne, *Bible Problems*, p. 42; cf. Chase, *Supernatural Elements &c.*, pp. 23, 24.

³ J. Armitage Robinson, *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*, p. 47.

Of such sort should be our attitude in respect to critical investigation of Christianity, of the writings of the New Testament generally, of the historical documents contained in it, of that marvellous treatise known to us as "The Gospel according to St John."

In the following pages we shall make the acquaintance of many students of that Gospel, hear what they have to say, look into the matter for ourselves.

CHAPTER I.

“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN.”

It has been beautifully said of a Japanese gentleman who became a Christian :

“The vision of glory which came to him while reading John’s account of Our Lord’s life and teaching was a vision from another and diviner world ; he fell at the feet of Christ, exclaiming, ‘My Lord and my God.’ ...He *saw* the Divine majesty and the Divine grace of Christ ; what could he do but worship him¹ ?”

There are thousands who would testify to the same experience. Dear to the heart of Christendom, this Fourth Gospel has over and over again been felt to unfold “a vision from another and diviner world” ; to reveal the Lord Christ in all the splendour of divine glory. Few, perhaps, would describe it as the “most interesting” of the records of the life and work of Jesus ; for the vast majority it is the “favorite Gospel”

¹ Dale, *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, pp. 42, 46, 47.

which responds to deep longings of their inmost soul. They find it pointing to One mighty to save, and in whom they may safely trust. They turn to it as to a never-failing source of "comfortable words" in the hour of pain or sorrow. With Luther they would hold it "the one tender right chief Gospel, and infinitely preferable to the other three¹." They would re-echo the words of Augustine: "in the four Gospels, or rather the four books of the one Gospel, St John the Apostle, not unworthily in respect of spiritual intelligence compared to the eagle, hath taken a higher flight, and soared in his preaching much more sublimely than the other three, and in the lifting up thereof would have our hearts lifted up likewise²."

That such are the feelings of many is certain. At once questions arise as to deeply-rooted convictions—shall we say, preconceived opinions?—with which "St John's Gospel" is approached by them, read, treasured. Is there not a something which lies behind a realisation of the help, the comfort, the spiritual teaching, discovered in it; a fixed belief absolutely independent of impressions however strong of its "tender and unearthly beauty³?"

¹ Werke (Erlangen, 1854), LXIII. 115: "Das einzige zarte rechte Haupt-Evangelium." Cf. Oberhey, *Der Gottesbrunnen der Menschheit*, p. v: "des neuen Testaments Allerheiligstes."

² St Augustine on St John, Hom. xxxvi.

³ Drummond, *Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 2.

Truly, yes. The conviction now to be recognised is one which speaks of a sense of absolute security. With those who thus treasure the Gospel with which we are concerned there is no thought of difficulties respecting it. It has either never occurred to them to suspect difficulties, or they have been content to ignore them, to silence doubt. In the case of the greater number there is probably no knowledge whatever of problems raised by this Gospel. As with the Japanese gentleman above referred to, so with them; they do not “check their wonder and their awe” by asking questions about the authorship of the book, its credibility. They are wont to read it as the absolutely true narrative. That it comes to them from “the disciple whom Jesus loved” they are fully assured. The title at its head has been once for all decisive for them: “The Gospel according to St John.”

It has been so regarded and read through many centuries. Of a truth “no Gospel comes to us with stronger external evidence of its acceptance by the Church¹.” We call it “The Gospel according to St John”; well, such, we are told, was the name borne by it immediately on its appearance in literature as the work not only used but formally adopted². When towards the end of the second century the four Gospels

¹ J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 113.

² O. Holtzmann, *Das Evān. des Johannes*, p. 115 (“eigentlich eingezogenes Werk”).

emerge into the clear light of day this Gospel is one of them, and its authority is "recognised as undoubtingly and unhesitatingly as that of the other three¹." A few early dissentients are heard of; otherwise the Johannine authorship is, practically, assumed as a matter of course. "The orthodox opinion that, in his old age, the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, wrote his Gospel as a last testament to the Church²," and that what he wrote was a true narrative, remained unchallenged through many centuries.

Now, it is indisputable that "ecclesiastical tradition has never assigned this Fourth Gospel to anyone but the Apostle John³." To-day it is borne in upon us that what ecclesiastical tradition and orthodox opinion have persistently affirmed—the Johannine authorship of the Gospel and its historicity—is gravely questioned, not to say disallowed. A reminder comes from one who will have this "unique book" approached with "no ordinary reverence," that "the time is past when we can accept, without a shade of misgiving, the tradition of its authorship, and delight ourselves without a question in its narratives⁴." We are, in short, made to think of uncertainties. If with some of us there is that sense of security which was noted a moment ago, it will be,

¹ Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 162.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 402.

³ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien &c.*, p. 103.

⁴ Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, pp. 1, 2.

perhaps, rudely shaken. It may seem that the ground is no longer firm beneath our feet.

The “shaking process” may be said to date from the last decades of the eighteenth century. With 1792 came the “shallow criticism” of an Englishman who asked, in somewhat coarsely expressed astonishment, “how any kind of delusion should have induced creatures endowed with reason so long to have received it (the Fourth Gospel) as the word of truth and the work of an apostle of Jesus Christ¹.” Some thirty years later a German professor propounded reasons for finding it incredible that the Gospel should really have come from an apostle’s pen²; if he subsequently made show of retreating from his position it was felt by others that his reasons remained cogent reasons notwithstanding the recantation³. Since then criticism of the Fourth Gospel has verily grown into a “mighty stream”; a stream by which, so it has been contended, the flood-gates of established belief and opinion have been completely swept away⁴. That strong assertions such as these have been met with counter-assertions (of which more later on) is true enough: the fact remains that “the Johannine question has become the cardinal

¹ Evanson, *Dissonance of the Four commonly received Gospels*, p. 226. (The “shallow criticism,” as Luthardt calls it, if of a particular passage, is generally indicative of Evanson’s position.)

² Bretschneider, *Probabilia &c.*, *passim*.

³ Hilgenfeld, *Einleit.*, p. 697.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 700.

inquiry, not merely of all New Testament criticism, but even of Christology¹." The delicacy, the exceeding intricacy, of the questions raised are fully recognised. A mass of literature testifies to the fact that "the problem of the Fourth Gospel is still the most unsettled, the most living, the most sensitive in all the field of Introduction²." And this literature illustrates a variety of position among theological inquirers of recent times. By some the Johannine authorship, and with it the trustworthiness of the Johannine narrative, is vigorously maintained; by others it is contended with "exceeding vigour and rigour" that the Fourth Gospel cannot possibly be assigned to the Apostle John, and that its historicity must be disallowed. Between the two extreme positions there are many others which tell of a mutual recognition that there may be, after all, something in what is argued for by the other side. Concessions are made by some of those who are convinced that the Gospel really comes from St John; they allow its very late date; its subjectivity; "its apparent transference of the matured thought of the author to the lips of the speakers in his narrative³"; it is for some of them "an interpretation rather than a life⁴"; they hesitate to contend for the acceptance of its every

¹ Luthardt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 3.

² Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 252.

³ J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, pp. 114, 115; cf. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, pp. ix f.

⁴ Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 252.

detail. So also concessions are made by those who prefer, maybe, to speak of the author as “the great Unknown”; who at any rate question or deny the traditional authorship: they have acquiesced in an earlier date; the word “fiction” is more rarely heard from them; there is a readiness to allow dependence on Johannine notes and influences even if the Evangelist cannot be discovered in St John himself. “Even among those critics who regard the Gospel as concerned, on the whole, more with religious instruction than historic accuracy, there are some who make the reservation that echoes of a true historic record are to be heard in it, so that it may be called a mixture of truth and poetry¹.”

The preceding remarks must suffice as to the diversity of position of students of the Fourth Gospel. We are to attempt to follow some of them in their investigations; and as by no means confining ourselves to the works of theological inquirers of our own land. Frequent will be the reference to the productions of many a Continental workshop; in particular to German scholars with “their indefatigable industry, their profound thought, their conscientious love of knowledge².” They may sometimes fail to convince us; perhaps defects of temperament and method may become apparent; warm,

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 3; cf. Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 1-33; Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, pp. 436-438.

² Stanley, *Sermons on the Apostolic Age*.

in any case, shall be our appreciation of the "German spirit of research and love of truth¹" so conspicuously displayed. Two of them shall give us a lead; how far we shall be disposed to go with them remains to be seen. At all events their recently published hand-books shall open out questions raised by the Fourth Gospel; we shall pursue our inquiry on the lines generally marked out by them.

There is something which, at this stage, may well be impressed on those who perhaps feel that they are being robbed of their sense of security. As they remark questions raised with respect to the Fourth Gospel, and weight allowed to each difficulty which presents itself, they may only too readily form erroneous opinions with regard to one and all who part company from traditional belief; they will perhaps recall words which lay it down that the "assailants (of the Gospel) are of two kinds: those who deny the miraculous element in Christianity, those who deny the distinctive character of Christian doctrine"; and that the Gospel "confronts both²." They are words, be it said, which, if true of some critics, are most certainly not true all round. Those who reject the Johannine authorship of the Gospel are not one and all prejudiced by "its emphatic declaration of the divinity of Christ." On the contrary, "there are many who are

¹ Stanley, *Sermons on the Apostolic Age*.

² Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 47; cf. Düsterdieck, *Über das Evglm. des Johannes (Theol. Stud. u. Krit.)*, p. 783.

heartily devoted to that central truth, and yet cannot easily persuade themselves that the Fourth Gospel offers them history quite in the sense that the other Gospels do, cannot think that Christ spoke exactly as He is here represented as speaking, and consequently cannot feel assured that this is the record of an eye-witness, or, in other words, of the Apostle St John¹.” So, on the other hand, the Johannine authorship can be upheld by a Unitarian Divine. The distinguished Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, disallowing the miraculous element in the Fourth Gospel, concludes that St John wrote it².

It has been said that the supply of religious and theological literature is abundant. Here in England, however, there would seem to be still need of small, popular, handy works on the many and varied subjects classed under the head of Religious History. Admirable books, pamphlets, tractates, are to hand in plenty; but neither the “Hand-books for the Clergy,” the “Christian Defence” series, the publications of the S.P.C.K., the recently published and most valuable lectures by the Dean of Westminster (to enumerate but a few) are

¹ J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, pp. 113, 114; cf. p. 118; J. H. Bernard, Paper read at Church Congress (Bristol, 1903).

² Cf. Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 32.

precisely what we have in mind. The call is for booklets in which the Apostolic Age, the origin of the New Testament, theories of the Creation, the Pauline Epistles, Miracles, and other kindred topics shall be handled separately, and in a way at once terse, scholarly, entirely appreciative of ascertained results of Bible study. The style should appeal to the lay mind. The booklets should be issued at a very low price.

Away in Germany the need is not only realised but supplied. Two sets of publications are appearing which, in respect at any rate to subject-matter, get-up, style, and price, might serve to exemplify the sort of thing above desiderated: the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher* (Popular Manuals of Religious History), and the *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen* (Bible questions and present-day controversy). The contributors are, for the most part, scholars of acknowledged eminence and repute. They discuss the very topics which, indicated above, are attracting the attention of thoughtful people conscious of difficulties and anxious for further knowledge. Speaking generally, they do so in an exceedingly attractive way. They definitely address themselves to the laity; and, as the prices range from about 4*d.* to 6*d.*, their works are within the reach of all. Apparently readers are numerous; word comes that both sets of Hand-books are meeting with a large sale. Although the individual authors preserve an independence, the two sets of works are generally indicative of different

schools of thought. The former series emanates from representatives of a more pronounced, and, in some respects, negative Biblical criticism; as for the latter, there are distinctive features which show the contributors alive indeed to the more assured results of Bible study, but decided to “take their stand on the ground of revelation.” There is, perhaps, just that difference which is perceptible between the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* and Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*.

The two works alluded to above¹ belong, one to the former, and the other to the latter series. In his *Quellen des Lebens Jesu* Professor Wernle of Basel devotes some twenty pages to the Fourth Gospel, and decides to rule it out as a reliable source for the life of Jesus; Professor Barth of Berne, on the other hand, in his *Johannesevangelium und die Synoptischen Evangelien*, is concerned to maintain its Johannine authorship and general historicity. The writers are alike characterised by a depth of religious feeling and genuine earnestness. Of the one (Wernle) it might, perhaps, be said that too little weight is attached by him to positive arguments for the authenticity of the Gospel, and that he is in the main content to reproduce stock arguments against it; of the other (Barth), that he makes light of real difficulties, and that the purely subjective is too much in evidence. In respect to arrangement and style the advantage will, perhaps, rest with Wernle; the average

¹ See p. 18.

layman will be more readily attracted by him; Barth, again, will appeal more particularly to devout souls already prepared to follow him in his conclusions. But enough: the two works, each good in its own way, will serve to open out questions, to mark out lines for the inquiry to be taken in hand.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL A UNITY.

OUR inquiry is more particularly concerned with the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, its credibility as a record of Our Lord's ministry. There is, however, a preliminary question which must be treated of, if briefly: Is the Gospel from beginning to end the work of a single author, or are traces discernible of the compiler's or redactor's hand?

The exact drift of the question will become clearer from the following considerations. It has been established that "the books of the Old Testament, as we now have them, are, to a far larger extent than was commonly supposed until recent times, the result of processes of compilation and combination, and, in modern phrase, 'editing.'" If at one time it was held that they were "written as integral works or by a single author, and preserved precisely in the original form," it is now generally allowed that "some were constructed out of earlier narratives; some were formed by the union of previous collections of poetry or prophecies; some bear marks of the reviser's hand; and even books which bear the names of well-known authors in

some cases contain matter which must be attributed to other writers¹." And what is patent in the case of books of the Old Testament is to-day recognised in the case of the New Testament also. Thus, to begin with, in the case of the Third Gospel, St Luke; its author himself appears to indicate sources from which he gleaned his information; long excerpts are probably incorporated into it. So too with a work doubtless by the same hand; in The Acts of the Apostles narratives derived from various quarters are distinguishable from what is evidently the diary of a travelling companion of St Paul. So again with the First and Third Gospels; it is a practically established result of Biblical investigation that they are in the main based on the Second Gospel, St Mark, besides incorporating from other sources, in particular from a lost document which is only to be reconstructed by critical methods from the two Gospels themselves². The Book called The Revelation is, conceivably, a Christian working-up of Jewish apocalypses³. The so-called Pastoral Epistles may be largely composed of genuine Pauline sayings which a later editor has compacted into their present form.

Now to return to the Fourth Gospel. Is it, we ask, the integral work of a single author? Or must it, on

¹ Kirkpatrick, *Divine Library of O. T.*, pp. 11 ff.

² J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 67; cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 16; Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 8.

³ Harnack, *Chron.* i. p. 675.

the other hand, be regarded as a compilation; as the composite work of a redactor who has availed himself of earlier narratives and sayings, and simply provided a framework or setting of his own? And again, is the Gospel as we have it the Gospel in its original form?

The last question must be answered in the negative. At least one passage (according to some, several passages) is "unmistakably an insertion, and by another hand: the story of the woman taken in adultery (vii. 53, viii. 11) is very likely a narrative pointing to a "genuine Apostolic tradition"; but, because of marked differences of style, it must be regarded as an interpolation, and as such it is printed in the Revised Version¹. It is, further, possible that disturbances and displacements have crept into the text; the "arise, let us go hence" of xiv. 31, followed as it is by the unbroken discourse—certain alleged awkwardnesses in the account of the hearing before Annas and Caiaphas—are, may be, to be explained of the slips and mistakes of copyists. And here we may notice the interesting conjecture that the absence from the Fourth Gospel of an account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper may be attributed to an accident; originally there was such an account, but the leaf containing it dropped out².

¹ But cf. Hilgenfeld, *Einleit.*, p. 707: "Aber in dem Zusammenhang ist sie (die Erzählung) unentbehrlich."

² Cf. Spitta, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur des Urchristentums*, I. pp. 194-199, 189-193.

Another admission may be summed up in the remark that the author of the Fourth Gospel evidently had the other Gospels before him. As will be seen later on, he subjects them to a somewhat free handling. That he does make use of them is plain from cases of coincidence, sometimes verbal, between Synoptic and Johannine narratives¹.

Is the Fourth Gospel, therefore, the compilation of one who has simply pieced together what he takes from other sources, or is it the composition of a single author? This is, after all, the main question.

There is diversity of opinion. It is contended that "the Fourth Gospel is a composite work²." The suggestion is made that, even if the "famous comparison of Baur³" holds good, "the seamless coat had also a warp and woof and a tasselled fringe"; that materials oral and written have been used by an author who supplements them by his own reflections⁴. A similar theory, as recently elaborated, takes account of older sources worked in and combined; of genuine reminiscences, of notes by St John himself, used by a later writer as he pens this Gospel⁵. But such theories are surely hard

¹ Cp. Matt. iii. 16, John i. 32; Mark ii. 11, John v. 8; cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, pp. 105, 106.

² *Encycl. Bibl.*, III. p. 3338.

³ Not Baur but Strauss; in *Ulrich von Hutten* (Gesammelte Schriften, 1877, VII. 556).

⁴ Cf. Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 268.

⁵ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, *passim*.

to maintain in face of marked literary features throughout presented by the Gospel; and they have been vigorously, and, it is held, successfully controverted¹. The support they meet with is limited; there is a strong consensus of opinion that the first twenty chapters at any rate reveal the same pen throughout.

But what about the closing chapter? Clearly it is of the nature of an appendix, for the Gospel reaches a perfectly natural conclusion with xx. 30, 31. Is it from another pen? Is it written by the author of all that has preceded it?

Opinions again differ. "Clearly, yes,"—such is the unhesitating answer to the latter question which comes from one quarter; all the twenty-one chapters do really emanate from the self-same author². It is affirmed, on the other hand, that ch. xxi. is "a supplement, not by the author of i.–xx., but supplied by others, in the author's lifetime, with his approval, in fact, by his order³." The two scholars who thus differ are in full agreement on other points; what follows is the verdict of one whose position in respect to the authorship and historicity of the Gospel generally is widely removed from theirs: "ch. xxi. is, as is well known, a later

¹ Cf. Swete, *Studies in the Teaching of our Lord*, p. 127.

² Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 194.

³ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 493. Haussleiter (*Zwei apos. Zeugen für das Johannesevangelium*) assigns this chapter to Andrew and Philip.

addition, and not only so but, as can be proved, by another hand¹.”

What shall be our conclusion? We note to begin with, that, so far as is known, the Gospel was never circulated without this ch. xxi. being a part of it². Then, as we compare this appendix-chapter with the preceding chapters, we are disposed to say that, if it be by another hand, its author must indeed be held a past-master in the art of literary imitativeness. The resemblances are so strong that to distinguish between author and author is next door to impossible. We can but agree that “in respect of style and manner this supplement betrays with exactness and nicety the self-same author who has penned the rest of the Gospel³.”

And yet there is a reservation to be made. Constrained as we are to speak of the Gospel as the integral work of a single author, we carefully mark

¹ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien &c.*, p. 10; cf. Schwartz, *Über den Tod der Söhne Zebed.*, p. 48.

² Cf. Gutjahr, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit des Iren. Zeugnisses über die Abfassung des 4ten Kanon. Evglms.*, p. 185.

³ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 14. Horn (*Abfassungszeit, Geschichtlichkeit und Zweck von Evan. Johan. Kap. XXI.* p. 77) writes: “Auch wird das richtig sein dass xxi. 1-23 nicht so unmittelbar wie i.-xx. aus der Feder des Lieblingsjüngers geflossen, sondern in seinem Auftrag und auf Grund seiner Erzählung von anderen niedergeschrieben ist.” He adds: “Dass er trotz dem als Verfasser auch dieses Kaps. bezeichnet werden konnte v. 24, geht aus einer einfachen Beobachtung hervor.”

off the two final verses. They, beyond question, are by another hand. The "we" who speak in them are clearly "disciples and friends of the author whose work is handed over by them for use in the churches¹."

This reservation made, we own that the Fourth Gospel is indeed the work of "a single casting, and one which stubbornly resists all modern attempts to distinguish between source and source²." Its "unity and symmetry³" must be admitted. In short, we "concur in the judgment of Strauss that the Fourth Gospel is, like the seamless coat, not to be divided, but taken as it is⁴." Accordingly, we shall pursue our inquiry as convinced that a characteristic of this Gospel is a "deep-seated unity of structure and composition⁵."

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 6; Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 81. It has been suggested that the "we" also speak in xix. 35; cf. Weizsäcker, *Apos. Age*, II. p. 210.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ McClymont, *St John (Century Bible)*, p. 29.

⁴ *Encycl. Bibl.* II. 2556; cf. Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, I. p. 141, "the whole indivisible Gospel."

⁵ Sanday, *Criticism &c.*, p. 22.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

It has been decided that the Fourth Gospel is “a unity which cannot be satisfactorily distributed between two authors¹”; that a single author, whoever he be, has “managed to impress an admirable unity even upon the form and expression of his thoughts”; that he has woven his ideas “into one perfect woof².”

Thus far Barth and Wernle are of the same mind. But they part company directly the question turns on the genuineness of the Gospel: the former “unhesitatingly assigns it to St John³”; the latter sees ground for the “utmost doubt and suspicion”; his admission that “valuable recollections live on in what is but a very secondary historical source⁴” is equally a denial of the Johannine authorship. The former, let us add, has the support of, amongst others, a prince of German conservative theologians: “John, as we permit ourselves to

¹ Swete, *Studies in the Teaching of our Lord*, pp. 127, 128.

² Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, vol. I. pp. 298, 317.

³ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 27.

⁴ Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, pp. 14, 26.

call the author¹”; the latter is backed up by one who discovers much which “categorically forbids us to regard this Gospel as the work of an apostle or of an immediate disciple of an apostle².” And similar differences of opinion are illustrated by English and American as well as German scholars; the Johannine authorship being vigorously maintained by some³; as confidently disallowed by others⁴.

The question, then, immediately before us is whether the Fourth Gospel be really from the pen of the Apostle John or not. It must be allowed at once that it is an important question. True, no doubt, that the Gospel has a value altogether independent of its authorship⁵; the fact remains that its intrinsic value is immeasurably enhanced if it can be definitely assigned to one possessing intimate and first-hand knowledge of the circumstances and events narrated. If he be one who had no such knowledge, his narrative would cease to be the absolutely reliable narrative; for there would be always the probability that, in respect to this or that event, he had been misinformed. On the other hand, if the first-hand knowledge of the author be established, there will be the greater readiness to accept his statements. It

¹ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 466.

² Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien &c.*, p. 104.

³ As, e.g. Ezra Abbott, Stevens, Lightfoot, Westcott, Sanday, Drummond.

⁴ As, e.g. Davidson, E. A. Abbott, Bacon.

⁵ Cf. Oberhey, *Der Gottesbrunnen der Menschheit*, p. vii.

may not hold good all round that "a reader who is sure that the Gospel was written by the Apostle John will need no further guarantee for the substantial credibility of its text¹"; the inclination to allow such credibility will in any case be strengthened. And there is another consideration. The relation of the Fourth Gospel to the Synoptics will be considered later on; at this stage the fact should be noted that two of the three other Gospels (Mk., Lk.) are not by eye-witnesses at all, and that the origin of a third (Mt.), in its present form, is singularly obscure. If the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel has to be abandoned, well—there might remain not a single Gospel of which it could be positively affirmed that it comes from one personally acquainted with the Lord Jesus.

It is, then, no trivial question this: from whom does the Fourth Gospel really emanate?

The Gospel itself is silent; that is to say, nowhere is its author definitely named. Like the other three it is an anonymous composition; as with them so with it, the title at its head was not prefixed by the author himself. We are bound, indeed, to interpret it of assigned authorship, but it is simply "derived from the tradition of the Church²." If the pages of the Fourth

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 3; cf. Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, p. 438.

² J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, pp. 10, 11; cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 9.

Evangelist contain hints and veiled allusions and express statements, they are so worded that his identity is not explicitly disclosed. To look for an "I, John, son of Zebedee and Apostle of the Lord, penned this record of His Life" is to look in vain; there is no such declaration.

The question is, evidently, not to be answered off-hand. Inquiry is necessitated; it behoves us to seek for earliest traces of the existence of the Fourth Gospel; to ask: to whom was it assigned, and on whose authority? As our attention then centres on the Gospel itself, we shall ask further: what inferences and conjectures are suggested by its contents?

And so we address ourselves to the external and internal evidence for the authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

I. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

The subject is dealt with by Barth and Wernle; what remarks do they make on it?

To begin with Wernle. He argues, in substance, as follows: In the case of the Matthew and Mark Gospels the tradition as to authorship can be followed up to very nearly the turn of the first century; as for the Luke and John Gospels we can scarcely get behind Irenaeus. Scanty indeed is the information given by the latter with regard to Luke; the tradition advanced by him with regard to John has no very safe ground to rest on. He (Irenaeus) depends, as a matter of fact, on

Polycarp of Smyrna, whom, in his boyhood, he had known and heard; who, according to him, had been wont to speak of his intercourse with John and others who had seen the Lord, to tell what he had learnt from them concerning Jesus. By way of proof that this was nothing short of possible he goes on to say that, as John lived on at Ephesus into the reign of Trajan, Polycarp in his youth may well have known him. Up to this point Irenaeus' memory, no doubt, serves him, and the accuracy of his statement may be depended on. When, however, he adds (1) that this John, Polycarp's teacher, was the Apostle John, and (2) that this Apostle was the Fourth Evangelist, we are at once transported to a region of mere conjecture and inference. For this John of Asia Minor whom Polycarp knew was almost certainly that John the Presbyter who is so alluded to by Papias as clearly to distinguish him from the son of Zebedee. The two persons have evidently been confused, and in such a way as to leave the credibility of Irenaeus' statement in grave question. If he identifies this John with the author of the Fourth Gospel, it is not necessarily to point back to Polycarp, but to venture what may be simply and solely a conjecture of his own. In short, the question of the authorship of this Gospel still confronts us, and the only safe answer will be that offered by the Gospel itself¹.

¹ Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, pp. 9, 11; cf. Jülicher, *Introduction &c.*, p. 405.

Wernle, then, attaches little weight to external evidence. Barth, too, passes over it with rapid sentences; not, therefore, as making light of it. He alludes to objection raised by the Alogi—a little sect or coterie which attributed the Gospel to the heretic Cerinthus. He remarks that the Church's leaders might well have been tempted to acquiesce in repudiations of the Johannine authorship in days when the very people who disturbed its peace (Gnostics and Montanists) were wont to appeal to this very Fourth Gospel, to avail themselves of its terminology in their speculations. That the Church disregarded these and other difficulties—content to leave a weapon in the hands of antagonists rather than renounce this Gospel—is conclusive for a belief that all needful proof of authenticity was actually available. Slowly but surely did the Gospel make its way into the Church's use—just as did the Synoptics and the Epistles of St Paul. Resemblances to its range of thought are met with in the Apostolic Fathers and in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles; by the middle of the second century it is cited from (by, amongst others, Justin Martyr)—if without mention of its author's name; a few decades later it stands side by side with the Synoptics as the Fourth Gospel in the Canon of the New Testament, and is appealed to as Holy Scripture. A conviction has become deeply rooted that it was written by the Apostle John himself, at

Ephesus, at the request of his friends, at the close of a long life¹.

Friends and foes are to some extent agreed here. That the tradition which identifies the Fourth Evangelist with the aged Apostle John may be traced back to a very early period is, of course, allowed by all; the point of issue is whether the tradition be founded on a safe basis. As we remark that Barth abides by the "orthodox opinion," we may conveniently observe here that he is but reiterating the words of one who preceded him by many centuries.

This was Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea from A.D. 314 to 340, and justly styled "father of ecclesiastical history." The pupil and the friend of scholars, he was a scholar himself; possessed of extensive learning, and indefatigable in research. Courtier, politician, high in ecclesiastical office, he had travelled much; frequent were his opportunities of converse with other famous personages; he was fully conversant with the beliefs and opinions of his age. That he was something of a sycophant may be conceded; the point is that he was more than abreast of the times in which he lived. As a historian he had his defects; but his good faith as a historian is beyond question.

It is, then, no illiterate and obscure person to whom Barth and other holders of the "orthodox opinion" can

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium &c.*, pp. 9, 10.

appeal for support. Eusebius, a prominent scholar of his age, unhesitatingly identifies the beloved disciple of Jesus with John the Apostle and Evangelist who governed the Churches in Asia after his return from exile and the death of Domitian¹. He proceeds with a notice of the undisputed writings of the same Apostle: "of these his Gospel, so well known in the churches throughout the world, must first of all be acknowledged as genuine." He shows why it was placed fourth in order by the ancients; having related the circumstances under which the first three were composed he adds: "they say that John, who during all this time was proclaiming the Gospel without writing, at length proceeded to write it on the following occasion. The three Gospels already written, and having been distributed among all, having been handed to him, they say that he admitted them, giving testimony to their truth; but that there was only wanting in the narrative the account of the things done by Christ among the first of His deeds and at the commencement of the Gospel....For these reasons, the Apostle John, it is said, being entreated to undertake it, wrote his Gospel²."

These quotations (in substance) will suffice for the present. They make it plain that Eusebius is not volunteering his own private opinion only; evidently he has a strong consensus of opinion behind him. He

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 23.

² *Ibid.*, III. 24.

has consulted his authorities, and they are decisive for him that the Fourth Evangelist (and author of the First Epistle) is the Apostle John. Is it possible that he and his authorities are victims of some "tremendous error"?

There is a possibility. As will be seen presently, if Eusebius' own words appear conclusive, extracts from other writers which he incorporates into his work may raise difficulties. At this stage we dwell on his defects as an old-world historian; nor is it only to remark a style often dry and clumsy, a lack of system in the arrangement of material¹. Eusebius, in short, is not, could not be, the historian of the modern type. He does, indeed, record what for him are ascertained facts; that he has analysed his authorities, compared them, weighed them in the balances of his critical judgment, estimated the real worth of the accounts, whether contemporary or traditional, which have come to him, in modern fashion, is not to be expected². The rigid method of historical inquiry followed by students of to-day could by no possibility have been the method followed by one who, no doubt, read thoroughly³. Hence, not for a moment blaming him, we may fairly question whether the Johannine authorship of the

¹ Kurtz, *Church History*, 47, 2.

² Cf. Chase, *Supernatural Elements &c.*, pp. 4, 5.

³ Harnack, *Chron.*, I. p. 657. (Eusebius "las gründlich"). Cf. Schwartz, *Ueber den Tod der Söhne Zeb.*, p. 22.

Fourth Gospel is finally established by what he sets down in all good faith.

We will look into the matter for ourselves.

And we begin with a certainty. "There is proof that towards the last quarter of the second century, in every part of the Roman Empire, four Gospels had been selected and were regarded as authentic¹." These four Gospels (the "holy quaternion" of Eusebius) are found to be identical with those described as "according to"—the term implying accepted authorship—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; for Irenaeus they are the four pillars of the Church, and he likens them to the four corners of the world and the four winds, giving mystic reasons why they should be precisely four in number². They have been "left without rivals as authorised records of the Gospel History³."

Again, proof is forthcoming of the comparatively early existence of the Fourth Gospel. It is contended that the first unequivocal proofs of its influence on ecclesiastical thought and diction are met with in the Ignatian Epistles⁴ penned by the martyr somewhere between A.D. 109–116 when on his way to Rome⁵; true that no passage from the Gospel is actually quoted,

¹ Hastings, *D. B.*, II. 695.

² *Iren.*, III. 11.

³ *Encycl. Bibl.*, I. 674.

⁴ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 446.

⁵ Hastings, *D. B.*, II. 699. Harnack (*Chron.*, I. p. 719), says: "110–117; perhaps, but improbably, a few years later."

and that references to historical notices contained in it are absent; at any rate there is that which is strongly suggestive of "the Johannine world of thought and phrase¹." Resemblances between the Fourth Gospel and the writings of Justin Martyr are undeniable, nor may they be explained on the supposition that the Evangelist has borrowed from one who became a convert at Ephesus; they imply that Justin was actually acquainted with the Gospel. If his writings may be assigned to a date somewhere between A.D. 145-148 it may be fairly assumed that the Gospel had already been some time in existence. Traces of its use are manifest in the writings of early heretics². The very fact that the little sect to whom Epiphanius gave the nickname of the Alogi attributed it to the heretic Cerinthus at least favours the theory of its early composition, for Cerinthus was a contemporary of St John³. And indeed there has been a general retreat from the position of the older Tübingen school in their contention for a very late date. The Gospel is "not to be dated later than the middle of the second century"; "at latest from A.D. 100-125"; "somewhere between A.D. 80-110";

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, pp. 176, 177.

² Cf. Lightfoot, *Bibl. Essays*, p. 110. If we have in the *Refutation of Heresies* of Hippolytus the very words of Basilides as he quotes from the Prologue to the Gospel, a comparatively early date for the Gospel is at once established, for Basilides flourished, c. 117-138 A.D. See also Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, i. p. 144.

³ Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 211.

—such are the verdicts of three who disallow the Johannine authorship¹. The opinion advanced from a very different quarter may be acquiesced in: “there are indeed only resemblances between our Gospel and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, but they are far too numerous to be explained of ideas then seething in men’s minds; they are only to be accounted for by an acquaintance with the Gospel itself²”; and this, of course, is to affirm its very early date. If it can be dated between A.D. 80–110, the Johannine authorship is at once possible.

Two things, then, may be regarded as established: the general acceptance of all four Gospels before the close of the second century; the existence, many decades earlier, of this particular Gospel. As yet, however, no express references as to its authorship have been noticed; and it may be allowed that “earlier traces of acquaintance (with it) prove nothing either way because no statements are made as to its author³.” It may indeed have “existed from the very first under the name of the Apostle John⁴”; be that the case or not, “from A.D. 180 John (*i.e.* the Gospel) was almost universally recognised in the Church as the work of the Apostle John who died at Ephesus⁵.”

¹ Soltau, Jülicher, Harnack.

² Schanz, *Evang. des heil. Johan.*, p. 6.

³ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 403.

⁴ O. Holtzmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 157.

⁵ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 405. Theophilus of Antioch

On whose authority was it thus recognised?

The question is an intricate one. Before attempting to deal with it we should recall what was said above as to information at the command of Eusebius. That almost universal recognition of which we have now heard is significant; there must have been strong grounds—or what were deemed strong grounds—for it. Aptly has it been asked: “an individual might make a mistake about the authorship of a book, but could a whole community¹?” We, too, ask: is it really conceivable that, at the end of a good deal less than a century, Christians throughout the Empire should be labouring under a delusion with regard to a work highly prized by them? That widespread belief that the Fourth Evangelist was none other than the son of Zebedee; could it really have been founded on a mistake?

But beliefs do grow up on a very slight basis. And again, the critical judgment of an older world might often be at fault; the ancients would take on trust much that modern scholars would only accept after the application of rigorous tests. If in the case before us we pay due respect to convictions so generally entertained in remote times, we still ask: is the evidence as conclusive for us as it was then?

(c. A.D. 180) speaks of “John” as one of the “inspired men,” and quotes from the Prologue to the Gospel. Cf. Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, pp. 144 f.

¹ Mackay, *A Reasonable Faith*, p. 106.

There are several authorities to be questioned on the subject, and we begin with Irenaeus. A native of Asia Minor, he was born c. A.D. 135–142¹. That he resided on occasions in Rome is tolerably certain. The scene of his principal activities was Gaul. For several years a presbyter of the Church of Lyons, he succeeded the martyred Pothinus in the episcopate of that Church about the year A.D. 178. One of his works, the *Refutation of Heresies*, was written c. A.D. 180–190. The date of his death was at the close of the second century.

And Irenaeus is one of those who transmitted the traditions which descended to Eusebius as to the Holy Scriptures. His words, in substance, about the Gospels (as given by Eusebius) are as follows: Matthew produced his Gospel written among the Hebrews in their own tongue; Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed on in writing what Peter had preached; Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote down the Gospel as the latter had preached it; afterwards John, the disciple of Our Lord, he who lay on His bosom, also published the Gospel while he was yet at Ephesus in Asia². And again he says: “all the presbyters of Asia that had conferred with John, the disciple of the Lord, testify that John had delivered it (their traditions) to them, for he continued with them until the times of Trajan³.” And thus in a letter to Florinus, where he tells how in his

¹ Harnack, *Chron.*, I. p. 656.

² Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, III. 23.

boyhood in Asia he had known Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna: "I remember the events of those times far better than those of more recent date; the very place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse with John, and the others who had seen the Lord¹."

Irenaeus was acquainted with the Fourth Gospel. That, in the passage instanced, he means the Apostle is allowed², and ought never to have been doubted; he identifies him, accordingly, with the beloved disciple; he is, we remark, content to speak of him as "the disciple of Our Lord." For Irenaeus he is the Evangelist; then the question arises: is Irenaeus solely dependent on Polycarp for the belief that he has transmitted? The suggestion has been made that he is; that his belief, again, is founded on mere conjecture³; but we must confess to grave difficulties in accepting it. The exact extent of his intimacy in early days with Polycarp may be hard to determine; at least we may trust to his retentive memory. The express statement may be wanting: "I heard Polycarp answer in the affirmative when asked whether the John whom he had known was really the son of Zebedee, the Apostle, the beloved disciple, the Evangelist⁴"; all the same we are

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, v. 20.

² Harnack, *Chron.*, i. p. 657; cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 403; Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 213. See also Gutjahr, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, p. 3.

³ Cf. Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 10; Harnack, *Chron.*, i. p. 657.

⁴ Cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 405.

slow to admit that Irenaeus' sole authority was that Polycarp whom he is alleged to have misunderstood, that he was simply indulging in private conjecture if he pointed to the Apostle John. It might be so had he been a hermit; one who had lived his life in entire seclusion from his fellow-men. The absurdity of it strikes us in view of his travellings to and fro, the important missions entrusted to him, the prominent positions which he held. As far as it goes—and, no doubt, the decisive word "Apostle" is missing—his testimony must be deemed weighty; and it surely speaks of a belief founded on what he has ascertained from various sources¹.

We shall return to Irenaeus presently—perhaps to find that he is not infallible. Meanwhile our next witness shall be Clement of Alexandria. The date of his birth is uncertain; his death took place c. A.D. 200. In earlier life a learned pagan philosopher, he had travelled extensively in search of knowledge. It was at Alexandria that he became a convert; thenceforward all his energies were directed to promote the Church's welfare by his discourses and his writings. In one of his works he gives condensed accounts of all the Canonical Scriptures; the tradition respecting the order of the Gospels derived from the oldest presbyters and handed down by him is to the following effect:—

¹ Cf. Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 348. See also Gutjahr, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, p. 14.

those which contain the genealogies (*i.e.* Mt., Lk.) were written first; Mark, at the request of many who had heard Peter at Rome, composed his Gospel, Peter neither encouraging nor hindering him; John, last of all, perceiving that what had reference to the body in the Gospel of our Saviour was sufficiently narrated, encouraged by his familiar friends and impelled by the Spirit, wrote a spiritual Gospel¹. That Clement has the Apostle John in his mind may be taken for granted: and here we may remark his story: "no fiction, but a real history carefully preserved," of the youth who, having relapsed into evil courses and become leader of a robber-band, was sought out and reclaimed by the aged Apostle then lately come to Ephesus from the island of Patmos².

Now, the opinion of a man like Clement deserves respect; and here again it appears reasonable to suppose that it was based upon painstaking inquiry. And yet it occurs to us at once that Clement is no modern critic: he is content to place the Matthew and Luke Gospels first in order of composition, when the priority of Mark is an established result of critical investigation. Further, he has derived his belief from the oldest presbyters; the question arises, who were they and on what circumstances was their own information founded? And again, Clement names John as author of the Fourth Gospel; he no doubt,

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 14.

² *Ibid.*, iii. 23.

means the Apostle, but he does not explicitly designate him as Apostle. Conceivably he might have been told that the Gospel had been written by a John of Ephesus, and have straightway concluded that the latter was the son of Zebedee.

The singular expression, a "spiritual Gospel," will come up again in another section. We turn here naturally to Clement's illustrious pupil Origen (A.D. 185-254). Born at Alexandria he visited Rome, he laboured as a missionary in Arabia, some years were spent by him at Antioch, he journeyed through Palestine on his way to Greece. Profound were his studies; vast his literary activity; alike for Christians and pagans he was a "miracle of scholarship." Among his great works was a commentary in many books on the Fourth Gospel; in one of them he writes: "what shall we say of him who reclined on the breast of Jesus, I mean John? who has left one Gospel, confessing that he could write so many that the world itself could not contain them¹." By John, Origen means the Apostle John, and it may be noted in passing that, for him, both Gospel and Apocalypse come from the same hand².

Another name should precede Origen's in the list of witnesses, that of Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus.

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 25; cf. John xxi. 25.

² On the assumption of the one authorship (cf. Harnack, *Chron.*, i. p. 675), the locality of composition would be fixed in Asia Minor.

In a letter addressed by him, towards the close of the second century, to the Roman Bishop Victor he is found thus writing: "In Asia also mighty luminaries have fallen asleep. Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, sleeps at Hierapolis, and his two aged virgin daughters; another daughter rests at Ephesus. Moreover John, he who rested on the Lord's bosom, who was a priest who wore the 'petalon,' martyr (or witness) and teacher, he also rests at Ephesus¹."

This quotation from Polycrates' letter is not a little curious. That he means the Apostle John is to be assumed; why does he speak of him in a way which might suggest martyrdom? He identifies him with the beloved disciple; why this allusion to him as having worn the golden frontlet (τὸ πέταλον) of the High-priest²? But the point to be specially noted is this, an apparent confusion between two persons. It occurs to us that the Philip of whom Polycrates speaks is not the Apostle Philip, but Philip the Evangelist, who is referred to in the Acts of the Apostles³. There may, then, be a mistake here; there may be also ground for suspecting a confusion as to the identity of that John whom Eusebius, quoting from the letter, understands to be the son of Zebedee? And

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 31.

² It may be remarked in anticipation that the beloved disciple has been conjectured (by Delff) to have been of priestly lineage.

³ Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 231, suggests that he may be the Apostle after all.

again, the allusion is so worded that it might be argued that Polycrates is excluding the John he names from the number of the Twelve. The rejoinder is of course possible that Polycrates may have deemed a description so familiar amply sufficient to indicate that he meant the Apostle John. It remains a fact that he who "sleeps at Ephesus" is spoken of as "John," and without the decisive word Apostle.

From the voices of men we turn now to two very ancient documents which have also something to say on the question before us.

A very early list of sacred books remains to us. A mere fragment, it was published by Muratori, librarian at Milan, in 1740; hence it is known as the Muratorian Canon. There is no word in it to determine date, authorship, locality; it is written in barbarous Latin, but there can be little doubt that it is a version from a Greek original. It is generally conjectured that it was written in the West, perhaps at Rome, towards the close of the second century¹. Its opening sentences evidently referred to the Mark Gospel; then comes a statement as to Luke; the fourth place is given to the Gospel of St John, "a disciple of the Lord," and an account is given of the circumstances of its composition. The words are these: "At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and his bishops John said: Fast with me for three days

¹ *Encycl. Bibl.*, i. 679; Westcott, *Canon of N. T.*, pp. 190, 191.

from this time, and whatever shall be revealed to each of us (whether it be favourable to my writing or not) let us relate it to one another. On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, aided by the revision of all...what wonder is it then that John so constantly brings forward Gospel-phrases even in his epistles, saying in his own person, what we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things have we written? For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but also a hearer, and moreover a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord¹."

A legendary element is discernible in the story thus given; and it is suggested that it rests on some narrative more detailed and invested with romance². But to fix our attention on some main points: the Fourth Gospel is recognised as last in order; it is dated at a time when the Apostles are still alive; the collaboration of others is suggested, even if it be John who writes. The testimony, thus far, to his authorship is emphatic; at the same time the allusion to other Apostles is difficult to reconcile with the persistent tradition that he wrote in extreme old age. On the other hand, the allusion does not necessitate a change of the locality of composition from Ephesus

¹ The translation is that given by Westcott.

² Cf. Corssen, *Monarch. Prologe (Texte u. Untersuch., xv. i. 103)*.

to Palestine; the Apostles travelled about, and some may have found themselves together in Asia Minor.

The second document is the Monarchian Prologue to the Gospel itself. It would appear to be considerably older than the days of Jerome¹; and (with the companion Prologues to the other Gospels) may be regarded as a sort of introduction to the Gospel with more or less marked features indicative of the Monarchian tendency. The personality of the author of the Gospel, not the contents, is the main subject of it: John the Evangelist, one of the disciples of God, chosen by God a virgin...he wrote this Gospel in Asia, after he had written the Apocalypse in the isle of Patmos. And then comes the story how, knowing that the time of his departure was at hand, he gathered round him his disciples at Ephesus and descended into his tomb.

We now proceed to gather up the threads of what thus far has been remarked. The date of the Fourth Gospel has been pushed back to a comparatively early period. Before it has been many decades in existence it is generally identified with one who, if not expressly designated as the son of Zebedee, is at any rate so alluded to as to show that the Apostle John is meant. If the decisive word be wanting where the question turns on authorship, there is a strong consensus of

¹ Corssen, holding that the Prologues come from one author, is inclined to assign them to the first third of the third century, *op. cit.* p. 63.

opinion that the John named had his home in Asia Minor. And he is deemed pen-man; at the same time there are more than dropped hints at collaboration. A time comes when this John of Ephesus and Evangelist is plainly spoken of as Apostle and beloved disciple. As such we might recognise him forthwith were it not that another John has been made to figure on the scene; that "John the Presbyter" to whom Wernle has already pointed us.

Here we turn to Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia—about 80 miles E. of Ephesus. Possibly he and Polycarp were of about the same age; his life may have extended from c. A.D. 70 (80)—140; the story of his suffering martyrdom at Pergamus seems to have arisen from a confusion of names and may be disregarded. According to Irenaeus he was "John's hearer"—and beyond doubt Irenaeus meant the Apostle; it is precisely here, however, that we find that Irenaeus is not infallible; Eusebius corrects him with the remark: "Papias by no means asserts that he was a hearer and eyewitness of the holy Apostles." Of the work in five books written by him (Papias), probably when advanced in years, fragments alone remain; we are here concerned with the following extract:

"But if anywhere anyone also should come who had companied with the elders I ascertained (first of all) the sayings of the elders ('as to this,' not 'to wit') what Andrew or what Peter had said, or what Philip,

or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples of the Lord (had said), and (secondly) what Aristion and John the Elder, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I supposed that the things (to be derived) from books were not of such profit to me as the things (derived) from the living and abiding utterance¹.”

We remark, with Eusebius, that the name John appears twice on the list. By the first of the two Johns Papias undoubtedly means the Apostle; for he ranks him with Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, and Matthew. It would appear too that the second John is distinguished from the former; not only is he not named with Apostles, but he is expressly designated “John the Presbyter.” Were he and Aristion still alive when Papias made his inquiries? The change of tense is noticeable; what Andrew and others “had said,” what Aristion and the Presbyter “say.” Three solutions have been proposed: the “say” is a historical present introduced for the sake of variety; it is to be understood of utterances actually heard and still fresh in the narrator’s mind; of what those who have passed away still “say” in books². The last of the three theories might be open to the objection that Papias ever preferred the living voice; and it is possible that,

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 39. The rendering is Schmiedel’s (*Encycl. Bibl.*, II. 2507).

² Lightfoot, Salmon, Drummond.

whether he actually heard them himself or not, Aristion and the Presbyter were still alive when he made the inquiries afterwards incorporated into his work.

In any case the question is complicated by the appearance of this second John, "John the Presbyter." He, like the Apostle, is designated a disciple of the Lord—a description which Aristion shares with him. Because distinguished from the latter as "the Presbyter" it seems natural to think of some special prominence enjoyed by him. We ask whether he too had his home in Asia? An answer comes from Eusebius, who is not unwilling to allow the statement of those who say that there are two tombs at Ephesus, each bearing the name of John¹.

It is said that this "John the Presbyter," and not the Apostle John, was the one to whom Polycarp was really alluding when telling of his familiar intercourse with John and the others who had seen the Lord².

But the question becomes still more complicated. Here we are confronted with another statement which is attributed to the Bishop of Hierapolis: "Papias says in his second book that John the divine (*scil.* the Apostle) and his brother James were slain by the Jews³." With two authorities for it the statement is

¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 39; VII. 25. But cf. Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 170.

² Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 10; cf. Harnack, *Chron.*, I. pp. 657 ff.

³ de Boor, *Texte und Untersuch.*, v. 2. 170, 177; cf. Schwartz, *Über den Tod der Söhne Zeb.*, p. 7.

not to be disallowed off-hand; nor is it so easily to be explained of a confusion between John the Apostle and John the Baptist¹; that the former is really intended is strongly urged. On the assumption that the story is true, the use, by Polycrates, of a word which might be rendered 'martyr' (and he means the Apostle) is at once explained; the words spoken by Jesus to the sons of Zebedee² will have been fulfilled to the letter in the case of John as well as his brother James. It would not necessarily follow that they suffered at the same time and place: on the one hand, the evidence that John survived his brother by more than a few years is hardly to be rejected; on the other hand, the Jews stirred up persecution outside Palestine, and the scene of the alleged martyrdom might quite possibly have been in Asia. The strange thing is that a story so utterly at variance with the very early tradition as to a natural death in extreme old age is nowhere referred to by Eusebius and his predecessors; either they know nothing at all about it, or, knowing it, are

¹ As, e.g. by Zahn. Gutjahr (*Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, p. 110), however, writes thus: "Zahn's Erklärung ist sicherlich, so weit sie den Papias betrifft, weder unmöglich noch unwahrscheinlich. Ich will sie auch keineswegs bestreiten, doch sei es gestattet, einigen Bedenken Ausdruck zu geben. Welcher Leser hätte wohl bei der Zusammenstellung des Johannes und Jakobus an den Täufer und nicht vielmehr an den Apostel gedacht...."

² Mark x. 35-45. Wellhausen (*Marcusevglm.* p. 90) writes: "if the prophecy had remained but half fulfilled it would scarcely have stood in the Gospel."

content to ignore it as an idle tale¹. But what if, after all, it rests on actual fact?—in that case there might be but one John of Ephesus who survives to extreme old age, and he not the Apostle but “the Presbyter².”

Is there anything more that can be set down about this “John the Presbyter”? It has, indeed, been suggested that Papias, by a “mere slovenliness of composition,” has named the same John twice over³; but even were he as “limited in his comprehension,” as Eusebius in one place deems him⁴, it well-nigh passes belief that such a blunder should have found its way into his preface. That the second John he tells of was a real historical personage and distinct from the Apostle of the same name (whom he does not designate Evangelist) is, on the whole, highly probable. If so this John has companied with Jesus, for he is a disciple of the Lord. If Papias has actually heard him, he must have been the old man full of years. The possi-

¹ Gutjahr, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, p. 108. Stanton will not attach much importance to the story. Harnack discredits it. Sanday classes it with “unsolved problems.” Schwartz accepts it. Bousset (*Der Verfasser des Johannesevglm.*, *Theol. Rundschau*, 1905) finds additional testimony to the story of the martyrdom, and writes: “Somit steht ein negatives Resultat im Wirrwar der joh. Streitfrage endgültig fest: der Zebedaide und Apos. Joh. kann nicht identisch sein mit dem kleinasiatischen Joh. auf den man mit Einstimmigkeit später die joh. Literatur zurückführte” (p. 231).

² The question remains whether the authorship of the Apocalypse may not, after all, point to a second John.

³ Salmon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 269.

⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 39.

bility is that his home was in Asia Minor, not to say Ephesus. If he is styled "the Presbyter," if his utterances command attention, it is surely difficult to account him a person of no significance whatever. Granted that he is termed "the Presbyter," to distinguish him from his namesake the Apostle, it would still appear that he is a man of some little mark.

In face of all this it has to be remembered that later tradition apparently knows nothing of any John of Ephesus save only the Apostle and Evangelist.

Again we dwell on the curious, it may be significant, fact that where a John is alluded to as author of the Fourth Gospel (and by those whose thoughts are evidently of the son of Zebedee) the decisive word is wanting which would expressly identify him with the latter¹. He is the "disciple of the Lord"; he is the one who reclined on Jesus' bosom—and accordingly the beloved disciple; but he is not designated as one of the Twelve Apostles. A time indeed comes when he is spoken of as "Apostle"; but even then there is room for the conjecture that he has gained the title in the same way as others (e.g. Paul and Barnabas) who had not been of the number of the original Twelve. The further conjecture is, then, possible that he is,

¹ "Though so many titles of honour are here (i.e. by Polycrates) heaped upon this John, that of Apostle, the highest of all in those days, is not among them." Von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 427.

after all, the Presbyter of whom Papias speaks. On the assumption that the two smaller Epistles do really come from the same hand as the First Epistle and the Gospel¹ this same "John the Presbyter" may yet turn out to be the Fourth Evangelist himself².

To what very tentative conclusions does our inquiry, far from exhaustive, seem to lead up?

In the first place. The tradition which brings John, son of Zebedee, to Ephesus is persistent; it is hard to say that it does not rest on actual fact. "Manifestly a legend";—so it is somewhat airily affirmed³: it were wiser, perhaps, to agree that doubts cast on the residence of the Apostle John in Asia, not altogether captious, are not convincing⁴. For the ancients such residence appears to have been an "uncontested historical fact⁵"; and some weight must be attached to their testimony. That it deserves credence is strongly maintained: "We cannot refuse to believe that the latest years of the Apostle John were spent in the Roman province of Asia, and chiefly in Ephesus its capital⁶." The following words are noteworthy: "The impossibility is ever more and more realised of arriving

¹ Harnack, *Chron.*, i. p. 658.

² The term Presbyter is, however, one which an Apostle (in the narrower sense) might use of himself; cf. 1 Pet. v. 1.

³ Davidson, *Introd. to N. T.*, II. p. 347.

⁴ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, pp. 5, 216.

⁵ Schanz, *Evang. d. h. Johannes*, p. 2.

⁶ Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 51.

at a historical conception of the John-Gospel without allowing the prolonged stay and lasting influence in Asia of the Apostle John¹."

Secondly. True that the Fourth Evangelist is spoken of in terms which are also used of John the Presbyter; the fact remains that we are encountered by a consensus of opinion, dating from very early times, that he was none other than that Apostle and son of Zebedee who is held to be the beloved disciple. Eusebius, apparently, had no doubts whatever on the subject—though glad to father the Apocalypse on to the second John of Papias. The position of Clement of Alexandria is evidently the same; possibly also that of Theophilus, Bishop of the great See of Antioch². If Irenaeus be indeed "ultimate authority," we hesitate to rule him altogether out of court as witness to the Johannine authorship; to allow that his absolutely reliable testimony must be limited to a statement that he had heard from Polycarp about a certain John of Asia³. That he was dependent on Polycarp alone for whatever knowledge he possessed as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel is hard to believe. The presumption is that, if he will point to the Apostle John as author (that he means the Apostle is conceded), it is

¹ Hilgenfeld, *Zeitschrift für wissent. Theol.*, 1904.

² We remember that, for Theophilus, "John" is one of the "inspired men."

³ Cf. Harnack, *Chron.*, i. p. 657; Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 10; Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 406.

because inquiries made have furnished evidence deemed sufficient to warrant his belief.

Yet one thing more. That John, son of Zebedee, had his home at Ephesus appears probable; he may or may not have died a martyr's death. An important fact has been brought out clearly: the early recognition, by representative Churchmen, of this John the Apostle as author of the Fourth Gospel¹; and it is still a question whether the tradition which fixes on him is, after all, so lamentably weak at the commencement as some have deemed it. There must have been a basis of substantial fact on which the tradition rested; that, too, may be admitted. At the same time certain features and circumstances have been noted which require that a margin must be left for mistakes and misapprehensions by no means unlikely in an uncritical age. That the evidence "for the work of the Apostle John in Asia in the last years of his life" is overwhelmingly strong may be conceded; it is not so easy to allow that the evidence "for his authorship of the Gospel" is strong with a strength which is irresistible. On the one hand the decisive word is wanting which would remove difficulty; on the other hand hints and allusions are forthcoming which at least raise questions. There is room for a possibility that "the idea of actual authorship might almost imperceptibly have been substituted for a more indirect part in the work, that of a witness and teacher

¹ Cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 9.

whose utterances had been embodied in it and had inspired it¹."

And so we leave the external evidence for the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. It has been said to "constitute that portion of the field in which conservative theology has hitherto believed itself to have gained its securest successes²"; the impression left on our minds is that the external evidence is far from conclusive³; already, maybe, we agree (with Wernle) that it is the Gospel and the Gospel alone that can give the answer sought for⁴. As yet it appears to us "beyond question that, in some way or other, John, son of Zebedee, stands behind the Fourth Gospel⁵." Before very long, however, we shall discover grounds for the remark: "It must be admitted that, in ignorance of the tradition, no modern scholar would be likely to ascribe the Gospel in its present form to one of the Twelve Apostles⁶."

¹ Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 277.

² Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, II. 2545.

³ It is urged by a Bampton Lecturer that there is "much more reason to accept the Fourth Gospel as the work of the Apostle than we have to accept the histories of Herodotus, or Thucydides, or Xenophon, or Tacitus, or Livy, or Caesar, as genuine documents." (Watkins, *Mod. Crit. considered in Rel. to Fourth Gosp.*, pp. 138, 139.)

⁴ Cf. Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, pp. 11, 12.

⁵ Harnack, *Chron.*, I. p. 677.

⁶ *Contentio Veritatis*, pp. 222, 223.

II. INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

Another stage of our inquiry is entered. The tradition has been examined into; the Fourth Gospel itself is now to be searched for indications as to authorship. In other words, we pass from external to internal evidence.

In the first instance we ask: how is the question discussed by the writers whose respective works are opening up the subject generally and marking out lines for our inquiry?

To begin with Barth. He lays it down at once that "the Fourth Gospel claims to be the work of an eye-witness of the life of Jesus¹." Precisely the same thing is admitted or affirmed by many others: "the rank of eye-witness is certainly claimed for the writer with regard to the Gospel story²"; "turning to the Prologue we at once come across not indeed an 'I' but a thrice-repeated 'we' which includes an 'I,' the 'I' of the author³" (i. 14, 16), who is accordingly one of those who "beheld." But to follow Barth further; commenting on xix. 35 he remarks, "Surely the speaker here can be no other than the Evangelist himself, who is throughout constant in declining the use of 'I'; unequivocally does he vouch for what he relates by assert-

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium &c.*, pp. 5 ff.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 410.

³ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 467.

ing that he was eye-witness of it. It is no casual disciple who is spokesman, but one who will have it understood that his place was very near to Jesus." Reference is then made to notices of a disciple "whom Jesus loved"; one surely to be identified with that unnamed disciple who at the first and together with Andrew became acquainted with Jesus by the river Jordan, who is seen following Jesus when led prisoner to the High Priest's palace, and who is himself known to the High Priest. And this same disciple "whom Jesus loved" is, at the close of the Gospel, expressly said to be its author. Significantly is he again and again coupled with Peter; hence we naturally look for him amongst those who constituted the inner circle in the apostolic college. There is the little group of three; Peter, James and John the sons of Zebedee. In the last analysis we are pointed to St John¹.

We take up Wernle. In his view the self-testimony of the Fourth Gospel is singular to a degree. At the very outset the "we beheld His glory" of the Prologue prompts us to ask who it is who speaks; an individual, or a plurality of persons? personal eye-witnesses, or inspired Christian believers generally? The narrative proceeds, but anonymously, objectively; precisely in the manner of the other Gospels. We come to ch. xiii.; it is to be introduced, but in strangest fashion, to one of whom hitherto nothing has been

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium &c.*, pp. 6 ff.

heard; he is "beloved disciple" and bosom-friend of Jesus. Henceforward he is ever to the front. With one exception only he is, whenever mentioned, not so much a leading character as a figure eclipsing the otherwise known leading character Peter. And, after all, the exception ranges itself with all the parallels which have been drawn with Peter; for while the latter has denied his Lord, the beloved disciple is steadfast at the Cross, receives the parting charge of the dying Jesus, vouches for the reality of His Death. Precisely here is it that we learn that the beloved disciple is the witness, the authority on whom the tradition of the Fourth Gospel rests. Then, too, does the full import of the so striking eclipse of Peter by the beloved disciple become patent; the question is seen to be not of two disciples, but of two traditions; the tradition which rests on the authority of the beloved disciple is to have a place if not superior at any rate equal to that based on the authority of Peter. Earlier evangelic tradition has been quite content to command acceptance by a homely and objective style of narrative, and without any boasting of authorities and guarantors; as for this younger branch of tradition, it will seek to obtain hearing and recognition by putting forward an authority with persistence. And then this self-testimony is further and utterly complicated by the closing verses of ch. xxi.:—where a number of persons affirm that the beloved disciple whose death has been gently touched

on is precisely he who has testified concerning these things and written these things, adding, "and we know that his testimony is true." The authority of the beloved disciple, in other words, is at the last confirmed by the authority of the "we." Strange indeed does a method of procedure such as this appear to us. The authority for the Fourth Gospel none other than an apostolic witness; for all that his name will not suffice, there is still need of the testimony of the "we" who know and declare that the testimony of the said witness is true! Finally, we are left in the dark as to the name of this witness; as to who the "we" are. It is forced upon us that the Fourth Gospel lays claim to apostolic origin and authority in totally different fashion to the other three. Its self-testimony is such as to raise far more riddles than it solves. Far from establishing the authenticity of the work, it is calculated to awaken doubts and suspicions not easily to be laid¹.

It occurs to us, perhaps, that the first writer conveys an impression that everything is plain and simple enough. As for the latter, we are probably to a certain extent in agreement with him; the self-testimony of the Fourth Gospel is, indeed, of a curious sort; by no manner of means so quickly intelligible as the former is content to hold it. It is not only that "the author nowhere gives his name"; personal allusions

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, pp. 12-14.

there are, but the fact that he "designates himself merely in mysterious hints¹" raises grave difficulties, and will point to more than one quarter as we try to discover him. To treat the question under two heads:

(a) *Direct Evidence.*

Hints are forthcoming in the Prologue². One thing, perhaps, strikes us at once; the "we" of i. 16 may have a wider inclusiveness than the "we" of i. 14; because preceded by an "all" it might be interpreted of Christian believers generally, whether eye-witnesses or not³. With i. 14 the case appears different; true, no doubt, that the "we beheld" contained in it has been explained of spiritual perception; it has been pointed out, however, that "the original word in the N.T. is never used of mental vision⁴," and we conclude accordingly that the "we" in question should be interpreted of those who had actually seen Jesus. And we go a step further; we cannot but believe that of those who "beheld" the Evangelist himself is one; "by his use of the first person plural he associates himself with the

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apost. Age*, II. p. 207.

² John i. 1-18.

³ O. Holtzmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 198, "die Gemeinde der Gotteskinder."

⁴ Westcott, *St John*, p. xxv; Sanday, *Criticism &c.*, p. 76. But cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 121; Keim, *Geschichte Jesu &c.*, I. p. 157.

other eye-witnesses of Jesus' appearance on earth¹." It does not necessarily follow that he is one of the apostolic band².

To pass on to the remarkable passage, xix. 35. Who are we to understand by the "he that hath seen hath borne witness and his witness is true"—in formal validity? And again, "he knoweth that he saith true"—things that are true to fact;—of whom is this second "he" (ἐκεῖνος, "that man³,") to be interpreted?

Imagine such a passage meeting us in some recent biography or narrative; what meaning should we read into it? We should hardly explain it forthwith of a reference by the author to himself. Probably we should see him somewhat abruptly appealing to the absolutely reliable testimony of one who actually witnessed the event narrated. Perhaps we should add: he proceeds with an appeal to someone else, to one who can vouch for the truth of that which the aforesaid reliable eye-witness is still telling. Were we informed that the author is referring to himself throughout we should be disposed to answer that, if this really be the case, he does so in a very strange, roundabout way.

Very much the same thing, if not precisely the same thing, has been said of the passage before us.

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 207.

² Of the Johannine Epistles the first surely comes from the same pen as the Fourth Gospel; and so its opening words may be studied in connexion with the verses in question.

³ Barth sets down "derselbige" without note or comment.

The Evangelist¹, it is argued, clearly distinguishes himself from one whom he introduces as fully deserving of trust, if not from two such persons. "He that hath seen hath borne witness"—only a third party could speak thus. And it is also a third party who says of the witness: "and that man knoweth that he saith true²." The allusion is certainly obscure; there is at any rate some ground for the comment that "beyond doubt the Evangelist has an eye-witness in his mind from the very first; he does not, however, venture to represent himself as the eye-witness in question; he designates him in a way which is singular to a degree³." The Evangelist does seem to bring in two personages; the possibility is, however, that the "he that hath seen" may be explained of his oblique way of referring to himself; as for the "that man knoweth," the reference is hard to determine. Everything hinges on the significance to be attached to the word in the original. We ask: Is it really a word which must indicate a third party and not that eye-witness in whom we may perhaps recognise the speaker himself? It is held that it is; and by one firmly persuaded that the eye-witness is identical with the evangelist and the evangelist with St John; for him the one appealed

¹ We recall the conjecture that the verse really comes from those who speak in xxi. 24, 25.

² Weizsäcker, *Apost. Age*, II. p. 209; cf. Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, pp. 210, 211.

³ Hilgenfeld, *Einleit.*, p. 732.

to as knowing that what is recorded is true to fact is none other than the risen and ascended Master¹. An opposite view is taken by one holding precisely similar convictions as to authorship; it is urged by him that the word in question can be used by a speaker of himself, and that as a matter of fact it is often so used in this very Gospel². As for the former view—well, it is in full keeping with the upward glance so characteristic of the author, whoever he be; as for the latter, the whole style of the Gospel is such as to render it possible “that the author is simply turning back upon himself and protesting his own veracity³.” If it be more natural, however, to explain the word of a third party, perhaps there is room for the conjecture that he who pens the narrative is turning to one who, still alive, can corroborate his testimony⁴.

But such a conjecture may not detain us. For the present it must be enough to say that, taking the verse as a whole, it perhaps places us in the presence of the Evangelist himself. He may be the “secondary historian”; this one thing is certain, that he will lay claim to be (or is said to be) an eye-witness. Shall we

¹ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. pp. 474 f.; cf. Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, p. 78. See also E. A. Abbott, *Joh. Grammar*, pp. 284 f.

² Westcott, *St John*, p. xxv.

³ Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, p. 78.

⁴ The possibility must not be lost sight of that the words are written by another (cf. von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 436; Keim, *Geschichte Jesu &c.*, I. p. 157); and such a possibility will be referred to later on.

proceed on this assumption, and seek for traces of his identity?

Now, the eye-witness of xix. 35 (possibly the narrator himself) was plainly close at hand when the spear-thrust pierced the side of Jesus. We read in this same chapter of a little company who "stood by the cross of Jesus"; among them is the mother of Our Lord, another is the beloved disciple. We read of loving words spoken and obeyed: "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home"; instinctively we feel that that beloved disciple must be identical with the eye-witness who figures, who alludes to himself, in v. 35. No word is, indeed, said as a return for the closing scenes—what matter?—the "from that hour" is naturally explained of a statement that from that day forward Mary's home was with "the disciple whom Jesus loved." On the whole it appears highly probable that, be he the Evangelist himself or not, beloved disciple and eye-witness are one and the self-same person.

At once we turn to a third passage. Admittedly, chap. xxi. is of the nature of an appendix, for the Gospel has already reached a perfectly adequate conclusion in xx. 30, 31. What is stated in one of those two final verses which must be assigned to another and a later hand? Nothing short of an "express assurance"¹ that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is verily and

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 213. The "express assurance," according to Haussleiter, of Philip and Andrew.

indeed he "which beareth witness of these things and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true" (true to fact). It has been suggested that the declaration in no way turns on the authorship of the Gospel and is simply and solely concerned with the truth of its contents¹. But to think it out is, maybe, to find a threefold assertion in it: the disciple is yet alive; he is author of the entire work which has reached its final conclusion with v. 29; the "we," because in a position to know that his narrative is true, are themselves eye-witnesses.

To gather up the threads of the foregoing brief survey of the direct internal evidence.

With his "we" of i. 14 the writer does introduce himself; and as of the number of those who had seen Jesus. In xix. 35 an eye-witness figures; one who is evidently living; who has not merely seen but companied with Jesus; who had stood by the Cross; who is the beloved disciple; who is possibly the evangelist himself,—we are told that he is in xxi. 24; where unknown eye-witnesses (as we infer them) expressly confirm his testimony. He has, no doubt, alluded to himself with an air of mystery, and in curiously veiled language. If by the unknown "we" he is evidently spoken of as still alive it is within the bounds of possibility that the "testifieth" of xxi. 24 may be explained by a "he being dead yet speaketh."

¹ Baldensperger, *Prolog.*, p. 110.

In any case the said "we" bid us recognise him in the beloved disciple.

But the puzzle is not yet solved. We ask, who was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"?

Now, it has been said that the disciple thus beautifully designated is not a historical personage at all. We have seen him alluded to as a mere "figure"; elsewhere there is the refusal to own him as a being of flesh and blood¹; we are asked to think of the "exquisite creation of a devout imagination²." And unquestionably his portrait, as portrayed in the Fourth Gospel, is absent from the Synoptics. They tell, indeed, of three disciples admitted to a closer intimacy with Jesus; about one who reclined "in Jesus' bosom" they have no word—even if they relate an occurrence which has been explained (in a way which appears strained) of special pre-eminence accorded to the two sons of Zebedee³. It must be said at once that, but for the Fourth Gospel, the beloved disciple would only be known to us as such by the tradition which identifies him with St John⁴.

¹ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 413.

² *Encycl. Bibl.*, III. p. 3339.

³ Cf. Jülicher, *Einleit.*, p. 413. The reference is to Mark x. 37.

⁴ The Synoptics nowhere allude to a disciple specially beloved by Jesus. One of them, however (Mark x. 17-32) says of a rich young man that Jesus, "looking upon him, loved him": what may not his subsequent history have been? The verb is the same as that used in the case of the beloved disciple, and signifies the love of moral choice.

He is, so we are disposed to believe, a real personage; in whom, then, shall we discover him?

If we discover him at all, it will be in a group of, perhaps, seven persons¹. They are alluded to—if only they were all mentioned by name!—in that very appendix-chapter which ends with an assertion as to authorship; Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee, two others who are not expressly designated but who may have been Andrew and Philip,—more probably “disciples in the wider sense².” Peter may be at once eliminated, for in vv. 15–23 the beloved disciple is side by side with him; we may strike out Thomas, so also James, so soon to perish by the sword of Herod. Accordingly our range of choice is limited to four: the two unnamed disciples, Nathaniel, John, brother of James, and son of Zebedee. What if absolute certainty were ours that the beloved disciple was one of the Twelve³?—in that case Nathaniel disappears, and with him, if disciples only in the “wider sense,” the two who are unnamed. John, son of Zebedee, then, might be the only one left in. His identity with the beloved disciple would appear to be made out. Going by that definite statement in xxi. 23

¹ Perhaps seven persons. Is it not just possible that there were eight; the eighth person being the narrator, in short, the Evangelist?

² Westcott, *St John*, p. 300. Godet (*St John's Gosp.*, III. p. 341) asks whether they might not have been Aristion and John the Presbyter.

³ Jülicher, *Einleit.*, p. 411.

he would appear, further, to be the author of the Fourth Gospel¹.

Unfortunately, the process of elimination is not so easily accomplished: even if seven persons only were present. John himself might have to vanish; for there comes in a thought of the alleged statement that he, like his brother James, died a martyr's death. But apart from that—true that the beloved disciple of ch. xxi. is identified with him pictured in ch. xiii. as "reclining on Jesus' bosom"; the question arises, how many were present at the Last Supper? On the assumption that it was really the Passover-meal we might answer; Jesus and the Twelve only. But, as will be seen later on, it may not have been the Passover-meal at all; if so, others beside the Twelve might have been present on the occasion. Conceivably, Nathaniel was there; conceivably the two unnamed disciples (who were probably not Apostles) also. May not, then, the beloved disciple be one of these three? We turn to i. 47-51; it is to hear of "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Nathaniel is quite the type of person to become very dear to Jesus: may he then not be thought of as the beloved disciple and author of the Fourth Gospel²?

¹ Cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 103.

² Gutjahr (*Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, p. 184) writes: "Durch das 4. Evglm. allein wird man am ehesten auf Nathaniel geführt, da Jesus diesem ein so schönes Zeugniß ausgestellt hat, und dieser c. xxi wieder mit Namen vorgeführt wird."

But here an important consideration arises. Nowhere in the Fourth Gospel is the beloved disciple expressly included with the Twelve: but for the one saying and allusion (vi. 67-71), it is indeed urged, "we should learn nothing whatever (from the Fourth Gospel) of a privileged circle of twelve Apostles¹." Not inclined to agree in questioning whether there was really such a circle², we find it, perhaps, hard to believe that one enjoying so close an intimacy with Jesus should be excluded from the number of the Twelve. If the difficulty be insurmountable, then, of course, thoughts of Nathaniel quickly fade away. The two unnamed ones, if not Apostles, will also be set aside. Again it would appear that John, son of Zebedee, remains in possession of the field. We now turn to i. 35-45; it is to become, perhaps, aware of a "silent spectator in the background³" in whom we are asked to distinguish this same John. Is he, after all, that beloved disciple of whom we are in search? If so, a dilemma may here be proposed to us; either he is the author of the Gospel, or it has been written by someone else who will personate him:—"The author is either the eye-witness (and, with every probability, the son of

¹ Jülicher, *Einleit.*, pp. 411, 412.

² Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 29. But cf. von Dobschütz, *Das Apos. Zeitalter*, p. 2.

³ Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, pp. 82, 83; cf. Westcott, *St John*, p. xxii; Schwartz, *Ueber den Tod &c.*, p. 48.

Zebedee), or, with resort to artfully contrived and mysterious hints, he poses as such...and good friends of his are prompt with their imprimatur for what is a sheer imposture; for they, knowing his testimony to be false, declare it to be true¹." We object to this way of putting it. There is, surely, no question of libelling the dead² if the alternative that the Gospel has been penned in St John's name be preferred: for the literary etiquette of ancient times sanctioned much that at the present day would be indefensible³. No one associates the idea of conscious fraud with the unknown author of Ecclesiastes because he chose to write under the great name of Solomon. So here; if the Fourth Evangelist be really one who has made himself organ of the eye-witness (John, son of Zebedee, or not) there is no compulsion to speak of a literary fraud perpetrated by himself and condoned by others.

The chances are, however, that those who take up the pen in the closing verses of the Gospel are, after all, stating fact when they declare that its author is

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 7; cf. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 80.

² Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, p. 81.

³ Kirkpatrick, *Divine Library of O. T.*, pp. 40, 41. "It was characteristic of the spirit and custom of ancient historians and poets, and especially those of the Bible, to live themselves into the modes of thought and expression of great men, and by imitating their thoughts and feelings, make themselves their organ." See also von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 15, 16. But cf. Fouard, *St John and the close of the Apos. Age*, p. xix.

that eye-witness who figures in its pages as the beloved disciple, St John, or not.

If so, it is he who thus styles himself. Objections here are numerous:—of that repeated and beautiful description, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” it has been truly said that “it certainly does not express the devotion of the disciple but a preference by which the Master distinguished him¹”; we remark that it has been fastened on for severest strictures. Its lack of modesty is insisted on². Stress is laid on the arrogance betrayed by it; on a self-exaltation insolent to a degree. That disciples and friends of the author might come to use it of one whom they revered and loved is conceivable enough; what is not conceivable is that he should deliberately use it of himself³. This sort of criticism, however, is artificial; it surely reveals a type of mind too aloof from human life in its manifold complexity. Nor does the theory which suggests that an explanation by Jesus of the Hebrew name (Johannan, whom Jehovah loves) has been assumed commend itself⁴. Be the author of the Fourth Gospel St John or not, he may yet be the old man full of years and hallowed recollections. He loves to dwell on them. Let people speak, if they will, of the vanity of

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apost. Age*, II. p. 207.

² Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 27. But see Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, p. 48.

³ Cf. Hilgenfeld, *Einleit.*, pp. 732, 733; von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 435 f.

⁴ Hengstenberg, *Evang. d. heil. Joh.*, II. 373 f.

old age; it appears natural enough that he should pen this "word of blessed memory¹."

Another objection may here be considered. The Fourth Gospel, it is said, indicates a rivalry between the beloved disciple and the "Prince of the Apostles." The former is the figure who overshadows Peter; never does he refer to himself without pushing himself in front of Peter². It is argued that the author, whoever he was, writes "with a certain animosity³" against Peter, and has resolved to know nothing as to a pre-eminence accorded to him. Frankly, we see little if anything which bespeaks jealousy, bitterness, hostility. At least some of the passages instanced⁴, it would appear, are capable of another explanation; the question is not of rivalry but of that close friendship which has often linked men of diverse stamp and temperament; of the attachment, it may be added, of a younger to an older man. And an apt rejoinder is surely not far to seek: it is precisely the Fourth Evangelist who will use fewest words in recording the denial; who will omit the stern rebuke (Mt. xvi. 23; Mk. viii. 33) which came to Peter from his Master⁵. The utmost we should venture to say is that, on the assumption that the author is not the beloved disciple himself, equality

¹ Luthardt, *St John's Gospel*, I. p. 95.

² Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, pp. 12, 13, 27.

³ Cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 7.

⁴ xiii. 23 ff.; xviii. 15; xx. 2-10; xxi. 7 ff.; xxi. 20-23.

⁵ Cf. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 185.

with Peter is claimed on behalf of one whose name is very dear to the churches of Asia Minor.

To sum up for the moment. The direct evidence, apparently, favours the conclusion that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is the author of the Fourth Gospel. But there is ground for questioning whether this beloved disciple be identical with John, son of Zebedee. Evidently he is a comparatively young man, perhaps a very young man¹. The probability is, that he has a house of his own at Jerusalem². If he alludes to his acquaintance with the High Priest³ in a modest way the inference perhaps is that he is a man of good social position⁴.

(β) *Indirect Evidence.*

Here we look away from passages noticed in the preceding section. For the moment we cease to take account of direct evidence in the shape of hints and allusions and express statements as to authorship. The

¹ xx. 4.

² xix. 27.

³ xviii. 15, 16. That "other disciple" is surely the beloved disciple himself.

⁴ But cf. Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, p. 101. If, however, there be any question of the "servants' hall" it is surely Peter who has to stay there while the beloved disciple has the *entrée*. The present writer is informed by an American clergyman that the latter's daughter, a girl of 15, expressed herself to the same effect.

question is now solely of the indirect evidence: we are to ask, that is, what is the impression conveyed by the style and the manner of the narrative generally? Is it one which raises thoughts of a mere secondary historian very far removed from scenes and events which he delineates with artistic skill? Or, on the other hand, is it an impression that first-hand knowledge must be admitted; that only an eye-witness could have penned this Fourth Gospel?

First of all we turn to our two recent German critics. One of them, it would appear, has little, if anything, to serve our purpose here; as for the other, he has "an array of additional reasons¹" in support of the traditional authorship accepted by him. Briefly stated they are as follows:—The Gospel presents a number of detached features which, in themselves absolutely unessential², are alone explicable as personal reminiscences. That the two first disciples came to Jesus at exactly four o'clock in the afternoon, that the water-pots at Cana numbered precisely six, that Jesus was in the treasury when he spoke of Himself as the Light of the World; all these details are irrelevant enough; the point is that they betray vivid recollections of a narrator who never stays to ask whether a thing be trivial or not, but who will describe scenes photographed on his mind—even side incidents. Hence it

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 7.

² Cf. Reuss, *Geschichte d. Heil. Schriften d. N. T.*, p. 207.

is that this or that description given in the Fourth Gospel is so eminently realistic; and that in the case of the stories told (as, *e.g.* of the woman of Samaria, of the man born blind, of the raising of Lazarus, of Mary of Magdala at the tomb) the scene is, as it were, re-enacted before our eyes. And as for the language of the Gospel, assuredly it points to a member of the primitive Church; penned indeed in Greek for Greek readers for whom Hebrew terms and customs must be explained; but revealing throughout a distinctly Semitic mode of thought by its phraseology, its frequent Hebraisms, its comparatively small vocabulary. John's diction has closest affinity, not with the literature of Hellenistic Judaism, but with that of Palestinian learning. That the Jewish Christian who holds the pen knows his subject as only an eye-witness can know it, is clear from his independent attitude in regard to the Synoptic Gospels¹.

But this last sentence raises questions which must be deferred for the present. The previous contentions will amount to this: the author of the Fourth Gospel is resident in a Greek-speaking community—he is himself a Jew—there is ground for recognising in him a Jew of Palestine—evidently he is a member of the infant Church at Jerusalem—so graphically does he write that he must have first-hand knowledge of the events narrated—the trivial details he records establish

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 7, 8.

it that he is an eye-witness. Nor will the conclusions stop short here; he will be identified (as will be remembered) with that beloved disciple who is John son of Zebedee.

There need be no difficulty on the first point. Beyond doubt the author writes his Gospel for a Greek-speaking community, or communities; for, apart from his use of the Greek language, he is careful to give translations¹ and explanations². His place of residence at the time of writing may well have been in Asia Minor.

But was he a Jew? The question has been answered in the negative by a master of English prose: the author is "a sincere Christian, a man of literary talent certainly, and a Greek...not a fisherman of Galilee³." A negative reply was made a hundred years ago and more by one who expressed his views on the Fourth Gospel generally in unchastened language:—"satisfactory proof" was discovered by him that the author was "no Apostle, nor any Jew⁴." And negations are heard still: it is noticeable, however, that there is a marked tendency to answer in the affirmative; even in quarters where the Johannine authorship of the Gospel is disallowed. The author, it is said, has come

¹ i. 42; ix. 7; xx. 16.

² ii. 6; xix. 31.

³ M. Arnold, *God and the Bible*, p. 284.

⁴ Evanson, *Dissonance &c.*, p. 226.

from and belonged to Jewish Christianity¹. "There is nothing to preclude his Jewish birth; his style and methods of presentment favour its admission²." "John, like Paul, was a Jew" is the candid avowal of one who will not reckon him of the number of the Twelve³. It is precisely the conclusion to which we ourselves are led. Features may be presented by the Gospel necessitating a more or less qualified assent to statements that "we find ourselves on Greek soil, we are breathing a Greek atmosphere⁴"; the conviction will remain unshaken that it comes from a Jewish hand. It suggests that a foreign language has been acquired, but not so mastered that thought can be expressed in it without effort, that all its resources are fully at command. In respect to form and diction there are traces unmistakable of the casting from a mould which is no Greek mould; "the style of the narrative alone is conclusive as to its Jewish authorship⁵." Hebraisms are indeed plentiful; significant the facility with which readers are informed as to Jewish customs and conditions⁶; still more significant is it that Old Testament allusions and references point sometimes from the

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apos. Age*, II. p. 218.

² H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 16.

³ von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Prim. Ch.*, p. 218; *Probleme des Apos. Zeitalters*, pp. 92, 93.

⁴ Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 28.

⁵ Westcott, *St John*, p. vi. See Thoma, *Genesis des Evan. Johan.*, p. 787, "Er hat mit der Muttermilch jüdische Denkart eingesogen."

⁶ H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 16.

Septuagint to the Hebrew Bible¹. If again and again the author makes use of the term "the Jews" he is not necessarily of a different nationality; the manner of the allusion would be perfectly natural in one writing for foreigners in a foreign land. This resident in, let us agree, Asia Minor, is, it appears certain, himself a Jew.

A Jew, but of what sort? A Jew of the Dispersion, a Hellenistic Jew, one of a family long settled in some region remote from the Holy Land? Or a Jew of Palestine, one whose earlier home had been in the very country marked by the footsteps of the Son of Man? It is, beyond doubt, "inconceivable that a Gentile, living at a distance from the scene of religious and political controversy, which he paints, could have realised as the Evangelist has done, with vivid and unerring accuracy, the relations of parties and interests which ceased to exist at the Fall of Jerusalem²"; but the thought is now no longer of a Gentile but a Jew; of a Jew, further, who evidently knows his way about the Holy City, who has travelled in Judaea and Galilee, who is by no means ignorant of the topography of Palestine generally. Granted, for the moment, that his work must be assigned, not to Palestinian, but to

¹ Thus, *e.g.* xix. 37 (cf. Zech. xii. 10 where the LXX. reading is "because they danced in triumph" or "insulted"). Cf. Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 363.

² Westcott, *St John*, p. x.

Hellenistic Judaism¹; may he not be after all some foreign Jew who, through force of circumstances, has spent long years in the land so dear to every Jewish heart? The conjecture, if tempting, becomes impossible with a closer study of his narrative. It does indeed prompt us to regard him as a Palestinian Jew; if not to "say more definitely" that he is "a Jerusalem Jew²." He is, perhaps, "equally at home in the provinces³."

A third question arises; is this Palestinian Jew one whose place was within the Jewish Christian circle of the earliest days? The conviction grows upon us that he is:—assuredly he sets down much that no Stephen, Saul, or Barnabas could possibly have told; but which is readily accounted for if he be one of the "hundred and twenty" referred to in Acts i. 15. We are inclined to connect him with events which date back to the days of Jesus: and this is practically to accept the theory that his narrative is based on first-hand knowledge.

Is he, then, one of the eye-witnesses? It would seem so; but an eye-witness of what sort? Eye-witness he might have been and withal a Greek; had we not recognised in him the Palestinian Jew, the mention of certain

¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 16.

² von Dobschütz, *Christian Life &c.*, p. 218. See also Schlatter, *Die Sprache und Heimat des vierten Evangelisten*, p. 8.

³ McClymont, *St John (Century Bible)*, p. 17. On the other hand Thoma (*Genesis des Evan. Joh.*, p. 788) decides that he had no personal geographical knowledge of the Holy Land.

Greeks who desired to see Jesus¹ might have been regarded as suggestive. Eye-witness he might have been, and withal a Hellenist; one of many foreign Jews who, thronging to Jerusalem on great occasions², had both seen and heard Jesus. But the question shall be narrowed down to this: is he one of those who had companied with regular disciples from the very first³? It might appear so from the wording of his narrative. Not that he forces himself upon the gaze; on the contrary, he will evidently remain in the background; the touches are, however, such that time after time we seem to feel his presence. There may be an occasional departure from strict accuracy of statement⁴: if so, it is to be explained by the confused memories of later life; by the fact that, in any case, there was a long interval between the event narrated and the telling of the tale. There may be, here and there, a difficulty: so detailed is the record of the converse held by Jesus with the woman of Samaria that it almost necessitates the presence of a third party in the

¹ xii. 21.

² Acts ii. 5.

³ Acts i. 21, 22.

⁴ There is certainly a difficulty in iv. 44 (cf. Matt. xiii. 57, Mark vi. 4, Luke iv. 24). So again in xi. 49: it is argued that the author conceives of the High-priesthood as an annual office, which it was not. The allusion has been explained of "the year of the Lord" (Westcott, *St John*, p. 174). Delff offers two ingenious explanations (*Rabbi Jesus*, pp. 85 ff.). See also H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 160; Jülicher, *Einleit.*, p. 420. And cf. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, I. p. 133.

person of the narrator; it is precisely he who gives us the impression that Jesus had been left entirely alone by the disciples¹. On the other hand there is a great deal which can only be interpreted of "the knowledge of actual experience²." The impression left on our minds, then, amounts to this: the author of the Fourth Gospel is one who evidently lived and moved in the scenes which he depicts. Companion of disciples, he is an attached follower of Jesus.

Is there anything else that can be safely affirmed of him? To judge from more than one passage he is one who seems to know instinctively what is passing in the minds of others; hence he appears to be distinguished by powers of perception of a singularly high order. Nor are those powers exercised in the case of his fellow-disciples only; again, judging from what is said, this attached follower is able to read the inmost mind of Jesus Himself. As we find him actually setting down what Jesus thought and felt, we are constrained to add: he is one whose relations with Jesus appear to have been singularly close.

And then we are again met by two alternatives. Either the Fourth Evangelist has a perfectly marvellous faculty for projecting himself back into a remote past and investing a narrative based on second-hand knowledge with all the air of reality; or he is verily and indeed one who will tell of events and circumstances

¹ iv. 8.

² Westcott, *St John*, p. xix.

which have transpired within his own range of experience. Of the two alternatives—at this stage, at any rate—we are inclined to prefer the second.

Here we may set down some results to which the internal evidence, direct and indirect, appears to have pointed us.

The author of the Fourth Gospel is probably an eye-witness. The indications of personal knowledge possessed by him would seem to necessitate the conclusion that he was a frequent, quite possibly a regular, companion of Jesus. There is ground for believing that he was admitted to a close intimacy with Jesus; hence the conjecture is reasonable that Jesus regarded him with peculiar affection. The eye-witness, then, is one whom Jesus loves, and with the love of moral choice.

It is an eye-witness who claims to be author of the Fourth Gospel. There is a personal allusion which, if strangely worded, appears to identify him with one who, with hallowed memories, will designate himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"; and such we are prepared to deem him. If he gives himself out as the narrator we are disposed to accept his word. When unknown friends of his testify to the fact of his authorship we are slow to disbelieve their statements.

The Fourth Evangelist, then, appears to stand revealed in that beloved disciple who is a real historical

personage. The latter would seem to be a comparatively young man; the youngest, in all likelihood, of the companions of Jesus. He is comfortably off, if not well-to-do. In regard to station in life he perhaps belongs to the upper classes. His type of mind is such that a work like the Fourth Gospel may well have come from him in after life. That he should ever have penned, and in a language not his own, a work establishing his claim to the higher gifts of style and diction is, perhaps, more than doubtful. But this Fourth Gospel is no such work. That it is a work of "tender and unearthly beauty" is unquestionable; perhaps it reminds us of "solemn cathedral voluntaries" improvised on the organ of human language. The author is, indeed, one who has pondered much and whose mind seethes with splendid thoughts; the fact remains that facility to give his thoughts elegant and terse expression is not his. He is no master in the field of letters. It is, after all, a just criticism which bids us remark that his ideas, if sublime, are few; that they are continually reiterated and in scarcely differing forms; that there is a poverty of vocabulary, a sameness in manner of presentment¹. And a precisely similar criticism is made by one who identifies the Evangelist with John, son of Zebedee: "If the same great conceptions and ideas return over and over again, the

¹ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 389. von Soden remarks: "The smallest amount of linguistic versatility is shown in the Johannine writings." *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 13.

language becomes almost monotonous, colourless,—yes, almost poor¹.” To repeat: the Fourth Gospel may well have come from such an one as the beloved disciple.

Again we ask: who, then, is this beloved disciple? It is just here that tentative conclusion becomes mere conjecture, that we begin to hesitate. Nowhere are we expressly told that he is one of the Twelve. On the one hand we find much that tempts us to identify him with that younger son of Zebedee who, figuring in his narrative, is never named; on the other hand the inclination sometimes becomes strong to believe that he is actually distinguishing himself, not merely from the Apostolic band, but from that very Apostle who would be accounted a “pillar” of the Church². Is he, we ask, obviously the Apostle John himself because he nowhere deems it needful to speak of his namesake, the son of Zachariah by the familiar title of “the Baptist”? We ask further: is it conceivable that, if the author of the Fourth Gospel be really a renowned Apostle, there should be felt necessity to testify to the veracity of what he has set down in writing? The former suggestion is, beyond doubt, weighty; as for the latter, we refuse to demand that the nameless witnesses should anticipate hostile criticism to be passed on them long centuries afterwards. Would it

¹ Luthardt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 19; but cf. Westcott, *St John*, pp. 1, li.

² Gal. ii. 9. Schwartz (*Ueber den Tod der Söhne Zeb.*, p. 5) suggests that the John of St Paul's allusion is John Mark.

ever occur to the "we" of xxi. 24 that exception might be taken to the manner of their statement?

As yet no decisive word seems possible. A moment's consideration may, however, be given here to a conjecture (already hinted at) which is, at least, plausible, and which rests on the assumption that the beloved disciple and John, son of Zebedee, are two distinct persons. They are, both of them, comparatively young men; perchance, for the sake of argument, they bear the same name—a very common one. Long years afterwards they both find themselves in Asia Minor, at Ephesus. If they are both high in the estimation and affection of the Christian communities, it is the latter, John, son of Zebedee, who has the pre-eminence. And then the time comes when the "spiritual gospel" is composed; the beloved disciple pens it: John, son of Zebedee, aids with his store of memories and approves. And so light is thrown on that mysterious reference in xix. 35 which, according to one theory, must be explained of a third party. "He that hath seen" will then be "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in all the consciousness that his record is true. For himself and for his readers there is another personage to testify that his narrative is true to fact; and so with his "that man knoweth" he points, not to the Ascended Master, but to the still living servant, the aged Apostle John.

It is but a conjecture. There are elements of plausibility in it. Whether it will stand the test of careful scrutiny is more than doubtful.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE SYNOPTICS.

ANOTHER stage of our inquiry is now entered, and it will be a lengthy stage. It will be convenient to have before us the very tentative conclusions thus far arrived at, and in condensed form.

It was agreed that a prolonged residence of the Apostle John in Asia Minor, in Ephesus, was highly probable. The unanimity with which early writers identify the beloved disciple with the Evangelist was duly noted; it was also remarked that, at the crucial point, some refrain from using the decisive word Apostle, and refer to him in terms which might be equally indicative of John the Presbyter. If on the one hand there was ground for the belief that "in some way or other John son of Zebedee stands behind the Gospel which bears his name," so, on the other hand, the possibility was recognised that the idea that the Apostle himself was pen-man might, with the lapse of time, have been substituted for that of a work not actually written by him but owing much—perhaps its

very existence—to his teaching and inspiration¹. That the Gospel itself claimed to be by an eye-witness appeared undeniable; and of two alternatives preference was given, if guardedly, to that which points to an actual looker-on at scenes and occurrences which he professes to relate. An impression was gained that, whoever the author was, his relations with Jesus had been singularly close. In the end it appeared possible that, even were he not the Apostle and son of Zebedee, the disciple whom Jesus loved was one and the self-same personage with the Fourth Evangelist.

Beyond the above very tentative conclusions we were unable to go. In the first place, difficulties presented by the external and internal evidence were realised; hence the note of hesitation which was heard continually. And again, as may already have occurred to us, there may be something more to be considered before the region of conjecture can be quitted for one of greater certainty.

As a matter of fact there is something more. Up to the present we have concerned ourselves with two sets of testimony only; the testimony of ancient authorities, the testimony of the Fourth Gospel itself: there are other documents which must now be questioned. The time, that is, has come when the Fourth Gospel must be confronted with the three other

¹ Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Entstehung des N. T.*, p. 43.

Gospels; those which, bearing the names of Matthew, Mark and Luke, are commonly spoken of, from their general similarity in narrative and point of view, as the Synoptic Gospels. Will any decisive word as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel be spoken by them? Will they substantiate or disallow the historicity of its contents? And, after all, this second question of historicity is "ultimately the more important¹" question than that of authorship. Glad, no doubt, should we be if cumulative evidence be decisive that the author is really the Apostle and son of Zebedee. If the substantial accuracy of its contents² can be vouched for there will be less reluctance to admit (if finally compelled to do so) that the Johannine authorship is either not proved or that it cannot be maintained. Not by St John himself; and yet a narrative which deserves credence.

But the comparison has been already instituted by many: with the result that an array of reasons are advanced for disallowing the genuineness and credibility of a Gospel which, from its admittedly peculiar character (a peculiarity obvious—if not to every Sunday School scholar—at any rate to careful and instructed readers)³ is generally grouped apart by itself, separately from the Synoptics.

¹ Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, II. 2518.

² Cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 5.

³ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 387; cf. Wernle, *Quellen &c.*, p. 14.

The aforesaid reasons are summarised by Barth¹. Nineteenth century criticism, says he, will have it that the Gospel is no record of actual events, but a manual of instruction on Jesus as the divine Logos manifested in the Flesh. As for its author, he is no Apostle and eye-witness; he is some unknown Christian of the second century whose own impressions of Christianity have taken the form of a narrative concerning Christ. If the Gospel be ruled out as a source for the life of Jesus it is from its marked contrast with the Synoptic Gospels; a contrast specially observable (it is alleged) in regard to two main points, the portrait of Jesus, and the manner and the subject-matter of His discourses. If the Synoptics portray Him as true child of His age and people, as great prophet-preacher, as proclaimer of the Kingdom of God and healer of the sick, as human in His every lineament and sharer in all the experiences which are the lot of man, the Johannine Christ, on the other hand, is pictured as a divine Being come down from heaven to move as a stranger on this earth, who makes men realise His ascendancy, whose mighty works are done, not from compassion, but to manifest His glory and to lead up to profound spiritual reflections, who discourses of His own divine origin instead of inculcating righteousness and pointing to the Heavenly Father, who speaks of Himself in metaphor, who treats

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 10-13. The passage is given in substance.

His compatriots as children of the Evil one and doomed to destruction, His disciples are no longer rescued sinners but seekers after truth, good people and not sinners flock to hear His words. In the Christ of the Fourth Gospel, it is said, there is no trace of development; from the very first He is Son of God, Messiah, omniscient, scarce feeling for Himself the need of prayer. Unfamiliar traits these; they are all traceable to conceptions borrowed from Philo's writings, and hence a portrait in which the historical Jesus cannot possibly be discerned. As for the characters, they are all made to speak in the same Johannine language. Very seldom is the question of the Kingdom of God, repentance, righteousness; the talk is ever of light and darkness, life and death, truth and lie, heaven and earth, the world and God—favourite ideas of the author which, repeated to monotony, betray his dualistic tendencies. Of such sort, says Barth, are the indictments; then, when the question is asked how any second century writer should have so completely transformed the life and personality of Jesus, conjectures of all sorts are put forward by way of answer. For some the author of the Gospel is a Gnostic, for others an anti-Gnostic; his work is viewed as a polemic against Judaism with its refusal to accept Jesus as Messiah; a special tendency is suspected against the little sect of adherents of the Baptist; it is held to reflect the strifes and dissensions of the second century. There may be no getting away from the idea that the Gospel

does embody genuine reminiscences from the days of Jesus: then it is a Christian of Asia Minor who has pieced together what some Jerusalem disciples may have told; a later redactor may have interspersed with narratives some collection of sayings which were current under the name of John; the author of the entire Gospel is indeed a John, but not the Apostle. The latter suffered martyrdom as Jesus had foretold; hence the Fourth Evangelist is John the Presbyter.

Thus far Barth in his enumeration of objections raised. It will be observed that there is no detailed reference to alleged discrepancies and contradictions; elsewhere, however, pointed allusion is made to the very free handling by the Fourth Evangelist of the Synoptics¹. Turning to Wernle we find him by no means anxious to condense in his cross-questioning of the Fourth Gospel.

What, then, has he to say on the subject²? The marked peculiarity of the Fourth Gospel is accentuated, and stress laid on the two utterly unlike portraits of Jesus. Meagre indeed is the material common to all four Gospels; in respect to the beginnings and the ends there may be indeed a strong family resemblance, but even there differences are apparent; but rarely are the intervening narratives found to coincide. Fourth Gospel

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 8.

² Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, pp. 14-22. It will be understood that only the substance of the passage is given.

and Synoptics part company in regard to the dates assigned to great events. In the one case we are pointed to Jerusalem as chief centre of a three years' ministry, in the other Galilee is for a single year the chief scene of action. Here the Baptist is the mere witness to Jesus; there he figures conspicuously as the great prophet of repentance. If we are told by the one authority that the vision at the Baptism was to assure the Baptist of the Messiahship of Jesus, the others have been quick to explain it of a sign for Jesus Himself. Fundamental is the difference which startles us in the respective stories of the Passion, the Death, the Resurrection. Not only is there the enhancement of miracle; while the Synoptic Jesus is moved by tender pity to His many deeds of love, the Johannine Christ performs His signs as proofs of His divine omnipotence. Discrepancies like all these are striking enough, but what is infinitely more striking is the difference of style and diction and subject-matter in the reported sayings and discourses of Jesus. Never before in the world's history have any two men illustrated such a total diversity in respect to mode of speech as do the Jesus of the Synoptics and the Christ of the Fourth Evangelist; not only is the language essentially different, but where the one is ever speaking of doing the will of God the other is Himself sum and substance of His own utterances. And again, changed is the attitude of Jesus towards His own nation, the Jews,—those Jews who in

the one case are portrayed in picturesque variety of class and section, who in the other have dwindled down to Pharisees, High Priests, perhaps also the Synoptic elders of the people; the Pharisees are now the very core of unbelieving Judaism in its hostility to Jesus; the Jews have persisted in their unbelief from the very first; while they are pictured as in hopeless case there is brought in that story so full of hope of certain Greeks who will fain see Jesus. The Jews to the devil, the Greeks for Jesus and for God!—so might we not unwarrantably understand this Fourth Evangelist who in his very Prologue directs our gaze to the Logos ever working in the world at large. It is to have travelled once for all beyond the range of vision of the Synoptic Jesus.

Thus do our two authors marshal the arguments against the historicity of the Fourth Gospel, and withal against the traditional belief that it was penned by an Apostle of the Lord. For the one they are arguments which fail to shake his faith in the reliability of the Gospel and its Johannine authorship; as for the other they are decisive on the other side, and he rules the Gospel out as a source for the life and sayings of Jesus. To which of the two shall we give our adhesion?

An admission must be made in any case. It cannot be denied for a moment that the Fourth Gospel does, in many respects, present a marked contrast to the other three, the Synoptics. True indeed that there

are features common to both groups, resemblances; it is equally true that discrepancies stare us in the face¹. They have stared others in the face before us; as a matter of fact our two authors have been but repeating—now and again almost word for word—the adverse criticisms of more than a century ago as well as those of more recent, of our own, times². That such objections are being reproduced to-day and accounted valid³ is certainly suggestive of doubts not fully laid, of difficulties still held insuperable by honest minds. Nor is it a little significant that, of those who uphold the Johannine authorship and general historicity of the Fourth Gospel, there are some who, alive to its peculiar features, are prepared with concessions and qualifications⁴.

Here the question arises: why the undisguised preference to be remarked in many for the Synoptic Gospels?

A word or two, then, about the Synoptics. As has been remarked already, two of them, Mark and Luke, are not by eye-witnesses at all; a third, Matthew, in

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 22.

² Cf. Evanson, *Dissonance &c.*, pp. 221, 222, 226, 233; Bretschneider, *Probabilia*, pp. 1-4; Hilgenfeld, *Einleit.*, pp. 703, 704, 707, 711, 712. Differences were also remarked by the ancients; cf. Euseb., *H. E.*, III. 24.

³ As, e.g., by H. J. Holtzmann, O. Holtzmann, Soltau, Bacon.

⁴ As, e.g., Barth, Westcott, McClymont, J. Armitage Robinson, Stephens.

its present form, is of obscure origin. Alike they are anonymous compositions. Three separate and independent authorities they are not; two of the authors have had the third before them, and incorporated the greater part of his work into their own narratives. The priority of Mark is now generally regarded as established¹; Matthew and Luke are both dependent on it; they have also made use of other sources, of what is called "the non-Markan document²"; each of them has in addition matter peculiar to himself. Their narratives, that is, are composite in their nature; several strata of evangelic record are to be distinguished in them. That primary and secondary elements are also to be discerned is more than probable. In that case the earlier tradition, the primary elements, will be forthcoming in the main, not exclusively, in the Mark Gospel.

To word our question somewhat differently: why is the earlier tradition embodied in the Synoptics so evidently preferred to the narrative given by the Fourth Evangelist?

One answer has been more than hinted at. The preference is accounted for by reluctance to admit the full divinity of the Lord Christ as it appears to shine

¹ Soltau, *Unsere Evan.*, p. 19; Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 8. The existence of an "Ur-Markus" is contended for; as, e.g., J. Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium*.

² J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 49.

out in the pages of the Fourth Gospel on the part of those who find Him pictured in the Synoptics as towering indeed above His fellow-men, but never for a moment ceasing to belong to humanity alone¹. For the present, however, we content ourselves with another answer; merely remarking in passing (and not for the first time) that there is also a realisation of difficulty in quarters where the divinity of Jesus is fully owned. And the answer to be given is this: of the four Gospels the Fourth Gospel is, beyond question, the latest Gospel. As for the Synoptic Gospels, belonging as they do to an earlier period, they enable us to get nearer to the events narrated in them². The earlier the narrative the greater the likelihood of its substantial accuracy; hence justification for the preference in question. That weight should be attached to evidence forthcoming from the Synoptics is, then, but natural. It would still be reasonable, were it proved conclusively that the Fourth Evangelist was the Apostle John himself. Penned at a late date and in extreme old age his narrative might quite conceivably bear traces of his failing memory.

Again we decide to look into the matter for ourselves, limiting the range of inquiry to some main points, and noting what may be said by our two authors

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 30.

² "The history of the Synoptic tradition stretches back to the very life-time of Jesus." (Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 374.)

as to discrepancies cleared up, vain attempts at reconciliation. One of them (Barth) has some remarks which we are quick to make our own: the answer to questions raised, says he, will vary with varying conceptions of the divine revelation to man; and it is nothing short of a boon that the Church is no longer fettered by mechanical theories of inspiration and interpretation which are alike unbiblical and misleading¹. What we too contend for is a frank recognition of the varying personalities of those whose narratives are before us. They are no passive agents, "living pens grasped by an Almighty Hand²," involuntary scribes of divinely dictated utterances. Each one has his tale to tell; each one will, and does, tell it in his own way, and so that his own proper individuality is never lost.

Then there is something which may be set down at once. As compared with the Synoptics the Fourth Gospel does unquestionably present certain peculiarities;—well, it is precisely what might be expected. The individualities of the respective writers are diverse; their style, standpoint, methods of presentment are

¹ Cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 13, 14. It is regrettable that the Australian Bishops, departing from the language of the Sixth Article, should write in their recent Pastoral Letter: "The Bible is...the word of God."

² Cf. von Dobschütz, *Der gegenwärtige Stand der N.T.-lichen Exegese*: "Das Bibelbuch galt als Einheit, die Einzelverfasser nur als Griffel des hl. Geistes."

certain to be characterised by diversity. And again, there should be nothing abnormal in the fact that this or that Evangelist—let us say the Fourth Evangelist—should refrain from attempting to cover the whole ground, or that he should complete, supply what was lacking in, the other narratives¹.

But is the question simply of a diversity of this sort? If so there would be little need to pursue our inquiry further, for the peculiarities noticeable in the Fourth Gospel would be sufficiently accounted for. As it is we have to remark not merely a variety at once natural and intelligible, but alleged inaccuracies, discrepancies, contradictions, marked differences of conception. The credible, it is said, is discoverable in the Synoptics; not in the Fourth Gospel.

We proceed with our inquiry, contrasting the Fourth Gospel more particularly with the Mark Gospel, and chiefly directing our attention to the following topics: Chronology, the Scene of the Ministry, John the Baptist, Miracles, the Discourses, the Johannine and Synoptic portraits of Jesus.

¹ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 499.

I. CHRONOLOGY.

The independent attitude of the Fourth Evangelist to the Synoptics is shown by his extension of the period of our Lord's ministry, by his bold transpositions of events and dates.

We take first the date assigned to the beginning of the ministry. Here, at first sight, the narratives appear to be mutually exclusive: the Mark Gospel informs us that it was not until after the Baptist's imprisonment that Jesus entered upon His work¹: from the Fourth Gospel we learn that He had already come forward at a time when the Baptist was still at liberty and the centre of attraction². Only then we are met by a difficulty raised by the Synoptist himself; when he relates the calling of Simon and Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee³. They are pictured as at once abandoning their occupation to follow One who, if the former statement is to be understood literally, would be an entire stranger to them. That they should render prompt obedience is alone explicable on the ground that Jesus was already well known to

¹ Mark i. 14; Matt. iv. 12; cf. Luke iii. 20, where the allusion does not necessarily fix the date.

² John iii. 23, 24.

³ Mark i. 16-20; Matt. iv. 18-22. Luke (v. 11) appears careful to lead up to his "they forsook all, and followed Him."

them, that they had already felt His constraining influence. We are led, in short, to infer previous acquaintance; discipleship at an earlier stage; work already done by Jesus which had rivetted the attention of the two pairs of brothers and prepared them for the more definite call. If the Synoptists do not actually go back upon their own statements, they certainly invite conjectures of what may have been a more private ministry begun at the earlier date and temporarily relinquished. The Fourth Evangelist, with his fuller details, supplies that which the circumstances manifestly require¹.

Again, the Synoptics appear to indicate that the public ministry of Jesus was begun and ended within a single year; the Fourth Evangelist, on the other hand, expands it to a period which includes no less than three Passovers². It has, indeed, been suggested that all three Passovers were, in reality, the same, but this is unlikely; the question is whether the Synoptic narrative does not, after all, postulate the more prolonged ministry. True that but one Passover is expressly mentioned; the difficulty remains of compressing the numerous events recorded, the many journeyings

¹ As, e.g., in John i. 40-42; cf. Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 24. Wernle appears to allow this (*Die Quellen &c.*, p. 23).

² John ii. 13 (not v. 1); vi. 14; xi. 1. Stanley (*Sermons on the Apos. Age*) has some remarks on the far longer ministry alluded to by Irenaeus.

to and fro, within so short a space of time¹. Allusions to seasons of the year are also discoverable² which are suggestive of the longer period. The Fourth Evangelist is evidently nearer the mark; and the other three are implicitly in agreement with him.

In the foregoing instances it is comparatively easy to reconcile the accounts given. Far less easy is it when the episode of the Cleansing of the Temple is brought in question. According to the Fourth Evangelist it occurred at the beginning of the ministry³; the Synoptic Gospels with one voice testify that it happened at the close⁴.

Attempts have been made to bridge over the difficulty. We are asked to believe that a Cleansing of the Temple really took place on two distinct occasions, but this surely appears improbable to a degree. There is truth in the remark: "such a demonstrative act, the expression of a holy zeal, can only once be morally justified⁵." The natural conclusion is that we have but one event to think of; then the question is, to which period does it belong?

We are inclined, perhaps, to decide forthwith in favour of the Synoptics as against the Fourth Gospel.

¹ Westcott, *St John*, p. lxxxii. But see Keim, *Jesus von Nazara*, I. p. 130.

² Cf. Mark ii. 23.

³ John ii. 13-17.

⁴ Mark xi. 15-17; cf. Matt. xxi. 12 ff.; Luke xix. 45 ff.

⁵ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 12.

Can it be that one of them (St Mark), embodying as it does the recollections of Peter, should be so utterly at fault as to the date of an event which must have made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples? And besides, effectively does the story stand in that part of the narrative which ushers in the closing scenes; the story of a decisive act precipitating that final conflict which was to end in death. If it really happened at the earlier period there would be surely little need for the question, "Who is this?" which, we are told, was asked later on¹. And yet there is some slight ground for hesitation; anticipating what will be said in another section as to possible repeated visits to Jerusalem, we ask here: what if the conflict had begun at the very first? what if the Galilean ministry had been but—so to speak—a series of retreats from a prolonged but intermittent ministry at the headquarters of Jewish orthodoxy? In that case it might be reasonable to conclude that the Synoptics have been set right by the Fourth Evangelist. Perhaps such is the case; it does seem, however, that the balance of probability is distinctly in favour of the Synoptic Gospels².

¹ Matt. xxi. 10, 11.

² A displacement of the narrative in the Fourth Gospel has been suggested. Sanday (Hastings' *D. B.*, II. 613) prefers the dating of that Gospel. Baldensperger (*Prolog des 4. Evan.*, p. 65) finds a sequence of thought from the preceding story of the Marriage at Cana. Jülicher (*Introd. to N. T.*, p. 418) regards the statement of "John" as "the less probable of the two." von Soden (*Early Christ. Literature*, p. 403)

One more instance of "violent alteration"; it points to the "Death-day" of Jesus. According to the Synoptics Jesus is made to eat the Passover with the Twelve; the Agony, the Betrayal, the Trial, the Crucifixion take place afterwards¹. The Fourth Evangelist records indeed a Last Supper partaken of by Jesus and His disciples (not necessarily the Twelve only), but he does not identify it with the Passover-meal; on the contrary he proceeds to relate that the Passover was not celebrated until the evening of the day following, and, consequently, after the death of Jesus². Two dates are thus given for the Crucifixion; the 15th Nisan of the Synoptics, the 14th of the Fourth Gospel.

Here, again, attempts to harmonise have been made. It is argued, for instance, that "to eat the Passover" was a *façon de parler*; a vague term popularly used of the whole seven-day—strictly speaking, seven-and-a-half-day—Feast beginning with the slaughter of the Paschal lamb; that the men of the Sanhedrin referred to in John xviii. 28 were thinking of the so-called Chagiga, or sacrificial meal of the 15th Nisan, which was held, not like the Passover after sunset, but in the course of the day³. Barth, who declines to waste time

says: "its position in the former case (Syn.) is natural; in the latter (Fourth Gospel) it has rather the effect of an anti-climax."

¹ Mark xiv., xv.; cf. Matt. xxvi. 17 ff.; Luke xxii. 7 ff.

² John xiii. 1, 2; xviii. 28; xix. 14.

³ Zahn, *Einleit.*, II. p. 514. Sanday, formerly inclined to adopt this hypothesis, now abandons it (Hastings' *D. B.*, II. 634). Baur

in such "preliminary skirmishes," hints at Synoptic allusions which afford indirect evidence that the 14th Nisan was after all the correct date¹, and these will be considered presently. We remark here that, in face of the very marked divergence on the main point, reconciliation is impossible. The Synoptists are apparently persuaded that the Last Supper was a Passover celebrated at the legal time:—and the contention that their silence as to formal rites and accessories of Passover observance is significant can scarcely be pressed when some of the details given are at least suggestive². The statements of the Fourth Evangelist, on the other hand, are characterised by precision, and steadfastly resist attempts to explain them away. A discrepancy must be recognised: the sole question is, to which of the two statements shall preference be accorded?

It is an exceedingly difficult question. And yet two reasons may be advanced for the belief that, in

(*Kanon. Evan.* p. 63) notices Ebrard's suggestion that in those days the Paschal lamb was not eaten by the whole population on one day but on two successive days; by the Galilaeans on the first day, by the inhabitants of Judah on the second. The suggestion was, however, withdrawn (Ebrard, *Gosp. Hist.*, pp. 400 f.).

¹ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 15, 16; cf. Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 22.

² Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 26. Granted that there is no mention of the lamb, other concomitants of the Passover-meal are surely alluded to. The singing of a hymn might also be deemed significant.

the case before us, the Fourth Evangelist is in the right; not the Synoptists.

To begin with. If the Synoptists identify the Last Supper with the legal Passover, their narrative reveals singular inconsistencies and incongruities when closely scrutinised. They relate a decision arrived at by the Sanhedrin to take no action on the "Feast-day¹"; and yet it is on that very day that Jesus is arrested. They naively recount occurrences and transactions which would be so many breaches of festival enactment, not to say impracticable at the time specified: one of the disciples has a sword with him²; Simon of Cyrene is said to be coming from his work³; Joseph of Arimathaea can make his purchases without let or hindrance⁴; the women, unrestrained by scruples, prepare spices and ointment. To inconsistencies such as these Barth was no doubt referring in his allusion to indirect evidence for agreement on the main point. They appear to indicate that the Synoptists, notwithstanding their contradictions, "bear unwilling testimony⁵" to the accuracy of the statement of the Fourth Evangelist that the Passover lay still ahead. And it may be that traces of early confusion in reports of the Last Supper are

¹ Mark xiv. 2; cf. Matt. xxvi. 5.

² Mark xiv. 47.

³ Mark xv. 21. (This is probably the meaning of "coming from the country.")

⁴ Mark xv. 46.

⁵ Sanday, Hastings' *D. B.*, II. 634.

discoverable in a saying of Jesus recorded by one of the Synoptists. We ask, what precise meaning is to be read into those words, "with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"¹? Of course they may be explained of the Passover-meal then and there celebrated. Another interpretation is, however, possible; that which Jesus had so greatly desired was not to be, for the Passover so close at hand would be celebrated on the evening of His death.

There is a second reason. Here we consult an authority earlier by a good many years than any of the Synoptic Gospels; and one which gives the oldest account we possess of the Institution of the Lord's Supper. In respect to leading features the account given by St Paul² is generally in agreement with that of the Synoptists; had we merely those words of his before us, "in the same night in which He was betrayed," we should have nothing to fix the precise date, for the words might apply equally to the Passover-meal of the Synoptics or the Last Supper of the Fourth Gospel. Even here perhaps it is significant that no reference is made to any Paschal lamb³; but we turn back at once to a passage which is, to say the least, significant; which has, indeed, been held to be decisive. There is the beautiful comparison: "For our Passover also," says St Paul, "hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore

¹ Luke xxii. 15.

² 1 Cor. xi. 23 ff.

³ Cf. O. Holtzmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 35.

let us keep the feast¹." And another beautiful comparison meets us further on: "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep²." The comparison is not only beautiful but apt if based on the dating of the Fourth Gospel. Christ Himself is conceived of as the true Paschal lamb offered up upon the Cross at that very hour when the lambs were being slaughtered for the Passover-meal. Christ Himself the firstfruits; the day on which the firstfruits were offered in the Temple coinciding with the Sunday of the Resurrection³.

And here, perhaps, an appeal may be made to the following passage in one of the Apocryphal Gospels: "The sun must not go down upon a murdered person on the day before their feast, the feast of unleavened bread." It bears out the contention that the Fourth Evangelist gives the correct date of the Death of Jesus⁴.

¹ 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

² 1 Cor. xv. 20.

³ O. Holtzmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 35. Cf. Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 267; Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 419; but see Keim, *Jesus von Nazara*, i. pp. 127 f.

⁴ Rendel Harris, *Newly-recovered Gospel of Peter*, pp. 43, 44. Cf. O. Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, p. 45. Jülicher (*Introd. to N. T.*, p. 419) gives it as his opinion that the Synoptics are "right as to the day of Jesus' death." And we are told that St Paul's thought of Jesus as the Christian's "Paschal Lamb" "probably induced the Fourth Evangelist to transfer Jesus' hour of death to the day on which the Paschal lamb was sacrificed." Weinel, *St Paul, the Man and his Work*, p. 303.

There are other instances of discrepancy, of "violent alteration." Some of them may come up for consideration in the following sections; those which have been discussed above will serve the purpose sufficiently in respect to the question of chronology. The impression left on our minds is that, if "the author did not wish simply to follow the course of events¹," it is he (the Fourth Evangelist) who now and again speaks the final word. The Synoptics which he has had before him reveal traces of the confused report, they invite and necessitate his fuller statements and corrections. We can but feel that not only in regard to the date of the Crucifixion, but in regard to other matters "the record in the Fourth Gospel may claim the greater internal probability²." That its author has "divorced the Cleansing of the Temple from its tragic connection with the final catastrophe³" remains tolerably certain.

It has been asserted that "the Synoptics, in this respect, cannot possibly be taken as standards, for chronology is entirely wanting in them; they are but precipitates of tradition on a groundwork of unordered fragments⁴."

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 403.

² Cf. Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 13.

³ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 443.

⁴ Delff, *Grundzüge der Entwicklungsgeschichte der Religion*, p. 271.

NOTE.

For an exhaustive discussion of Quartodecimanism, its rationale, and bearing on the date and character of the Last Supper, vide Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, pp. 173 ff.; Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, pp. 444 ff.; Zahn, *Einleitung*, II. pp. 509 ff.

II. LOCALITY.

Another "burning question" is that of the difference of scene. "According to the Synoptics the activity of Jesus is made to pursue its course on Galilæan soil; once and once only does he reach Jerusalem as Messiah, and it is forthwith to meet his doom. With the Fourth Evangelist he moves to and fro repeatedly between Judæa and Galilee; but the stays made in Galilee appear but as mere episodes when compared with the Judæan ministry: two are exceedingly brief (ii. 1-12; iv. 43-53) and the third somewhat longer (vi. 1-vii. 10)¹." Thus is the contrast stated; and if an explanation be asked for there are hints at Jewish and Baptist-disciple contemporaries of the Fourth Evangelist as main cause of the change effected in the narrative. It was felt to be above all things a very serious consideration that Jesus should have dragged out a quiet and obscure existence in so out-of-the-world

¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 3.

a region as Galilee, instead of appearing and labouring openly at Jerusalem, at the very centre of Jewish life, as would be meet and right in the case of one who desired to be regarded as the Messiah¹.

Explanations of this sort may hold good or not. There are certainly others which will occur at the present juncture; they are suggested by some of the very points which have been noticed and discussed in preceding sections. It has been agreed that allowance may be made for diversity of individuality, treatment of subject, method of presentment: hence it might be argued at once that the Fourth Evangelist has decided to select ground insufficiently covered by the three Synoptists. And again, what if it be possible to see in him not merely the Palestinian Jew but the Jerusalemite; one whose private residence may have been in Jerusalem itself? How natural, then, that the scene as pictured by him should be laid more particularly in his own immediate neighbourhood².

But then the question arises (and not for the first time) whether the Synoptic Gospels themselves do not deliberately invite assumptions of that more prolonged ministry at Jerusalem which is recounted by the Fourth

¹ Cf. Baldensperger, *Prolog des 4. Evan.*, p. 120. See also Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangelium*, pp. 48 f.

² von Soden, who discovers in the author of the Fourth Gospel "a devoted adherent of the Beloved Disciple," and who thinks of the latter as "a native of Jerusalem," has some remarks to the same effect. *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 439 f.

Evangelist. That he, on his part, leaves room for Galilaean activities is evident.

In the first place. Two of the Synoptic Gospels record the "pathetic lament over Jerusalem¹." Objection will here be raised to arguments based upon the passage: it will be said, perhaps, that this lament is absent from the earliest Synoptic; it will be added that the allusion to Jerusalem and her children is not to be understood literally, but rather of the whole population for whom Jerusalem was mother-city. Hard indeed is it to account it the utterance of one "who had not visited (Jerusalem) before during His public ministry²"; nor can we straightway acquiesce in the remark that to explain it of repeated visits is nothing but a "childish pastime³." The whole wording of the lament is such as to lead to a very different conclusion. It speaks to us of repeated efforts and repeated failure. And if we add here that "it is perfectly credible that the earlier visits of Jesus to Jerusalem saw the beginning of the conflict with the high priests which afterwards led to His death⁴," we are almost tempted to surmise that weight may after all attach to the Fourth Evangelist's dating of the Cleansing of the Temple.

Secondly. Even supposing that the argument based

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34.

² Davidson, *Introd. to N. T.*, II. 390, 391; Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 8.

³ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 419. But cf. J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 128. See also Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, p. 40.

⁴ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 183.

on the lament over Jerusalem must be abandoned (which we are slow to admit), there are hints and allusions in the Synoptics which appear to presuppose, actually to necessitate, frequent and prolonged visits to the Holy City. Dwellers at Jerusalem are numbered with the great multitudes who are said to have followed Jesus at the very first¹. Not as the friendless stranger in the city and its neighbourhood is He Himself pictured on the occasion of His final visit; on the contrary He is not only familiar with the locality, but He is evidently on terms of intimate and longstanding acquaintance with several households. A welcome awaits Him at the village of Bethany². In another village unknown men have learnt to recognise Him as Lord; hence they comply at once with the request made through two of His regular disciples³. There is a house in the city itself in which He has, perhaps, often stayed, for He can describe its internal arrangements; its owner is one already in His confidence and devoted to Him, for he is quick to place it at the disposal of Jesus and His companions⁴. The conjecture has indeed been made that he who needed but the Master's word to lend his house may have had an honoured place amongst those who partook with Jesus of that last meal⁵.

¹ Mark iii. 7, 8.

² Mark xiv. 3.

³ Mark xi. 1-6.

⁴ Mark xiv. 12-15.

⁵ Cf. Delff, *Grundzüge &c.*, p. 268. (It is, of course, possible to

What **conclusion** do we arrive at? Surely this, that the Fourth Evangelist is not so violently in conflict with the Synoptic narratives after all. On the one hand he evidently recognises that Galilee was frequently the scene of action: on the other hand he details that longer, if intermittent, Judæan ministry which the Synoptics appear to postulate; and he does so possibly as one whose own abode was in Jerusalem itself. At all events he will complete the story of which the other three Evangelists are aware, but of which their version is altogether meagre and inadequate.

A probability must be reckoned with that the Synoptists, with their confused chronology, have crowded into one short week events and occurrences which in reality were spread over a period of several years.

III. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

It is held that the Baptist of the Synoptics and the Baptist of the Fourth Gospel are two totally different personages. If, in the former, he is made to figure as the prophet "mighty in word and deed," he is, in the

account for these friendships by visits to Jerusalem at a far earlier period—Jesus would come up from Nazareth for the Feasts. But this is surely not to account for them sufficiently. The manner of the allusions is such as to imply ties strengthened, not necessarily formed, during a prolonged, if intermittent, ministry in Jerusalem.)

latter, relegated to an entirely subordinate position. According to the older tradition doubts are entertained by him, and expressed : " art thou he that cometh, or do we look for another¹?" ; with the latest Evangelist his assurance rings out loud and clear from the moment when he has pointed to Jesus with his " behold the Lamb of God²." There are, it is urged, two portraits of the Baptist ; portraits which are strangely unlike.

Granted that there are two portraits presented to us. What is not so certain is that they are portraits of different men. At least there is the possibility of their being portraits of the same man, but by different artists, from a different point of view.

But to look into the narratives. One thing is evident ; the omission, by the Fourth Evangelist, of any detailed account of that mission-preaching of the Baptist to which, at the same time, he is careful to allude³. He is, no doubt, content to assume knowledge of it on the part of the Christian communities for whom he wrote ; certainly he enables modern readers to draw large inferences as to its scope and import, as to the effect which it has produced. To read between the lines is to see the Baptist of the Fourth Gospel anything but an inconspicuous personage ; on the contrary he appears one who has compelled attention by striking acts and by incisive utterances. The

¹ Matt. xi. 3 ; Luke vii. 19.

² John i. 29.

³ John iii. 23.

authorities at Jerusalem, far from regarding him with complacent indifference, judge it more than expedient to send a deputation to make full inquiry at the scene of his activities¹. Significant is the wording of the question proposed; no mere "what is this that thou art saying and doing?" the "who art thou?" is tantamount to a recognition that the one questioned is no ordinary personage. And the question carries a great deal with it; almost instinctively do we expand it from the Marcan narrative²:—"who art thou to whom this crowd is thronging, by whom men, conscience-stricken, are baptised on confession of their sins?"

The two portraits, it would seem, are not so unlike after all. There is at least this strong resemblance; he who is portrayed on each canvas is really an illustrious personage. That the artists are different we recognise at a glance.

There is a further question: are the two portraits alike in a portrayal of the same steadfast gaze, the same immediate assurance, the same conviction unshaken to the end?

It is just here that a contrast in the narratives must be admitted. With the Fourth Evangelist the Baptist no sooner becomes acquainted with Jesus than, prompted by a heavenly vision, he bears record that

¹ John i. 19, 24. But see Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangelium*, p. 18.

² Mark i. 4, 5.

“this is the Son of God¹”; nowhere is there a word suggestive of a faith which had begun to falter. We turn to the Synoptics: as for the Mark Gospel, it records indeed the Baptist’s announcement of the coming of the “mightier One”; there follows but the bare statement that Jesus “was baptised of John in Jordan,” that a heavenly vision is immediately seen by Himself². The two other Synoptics relate much that occasions reflection. From one of these we learn that directly the Baptist sees Jesus coming to him he recognises His superior claims³. They appear to agree with St Mark in their description of the vision as seen by Jesus⁴. It is they (not Mark) who tell that story of disciples sent by the Baptist to Jesus⁵—a story which, sometimes explained of the imprisoned Baptist’s desire that his disciples should have their faith strengthened, is more naturally interpreted of doubts which had been rising in his own mind⁶.

Apparently, the portraits are dissimilar. In the one case the Baptist’s eye is seen gazing into an open heaven; in the other his gaze is, perhaps, fixed, but it will be on the One of whose coming he has been the

¹ John i. 34.

² Mark i. 9–11.

³ Matt. iii. 13–15.

⁴ Matt. iii. 16, 17; Mark i. 10, 11; Luke iii. 21, 22. According to von Soden (*Early Christ. Literature*, p. 454) Matt. makes the Baptist to be “recipient of the revelation.”

⁵ Matt. xi. 3 ff.; Luke vii. 19 ff.

⁶ Bousset (*Jesus*, p. 4) holds that it was only when imprisoned that belief dawned in the Baptist’s soul that Jesus might be “he that should come,” Messiah.

herald. We take account, that is, of the apparent discrepancy in the stories of the vision. Perhaps the suggestion will be made that the vision of the heavenly glory, the divine voice, was seen and heard alike by Jesus and the Baptist; that it is a case in which two artists have invested a single occurrence (however to be explained) with varying import. What if we be confronted with the two alternatives: either the Synoptic version of the story, or that of the Fourth Evangelist¹? The former would be, perhaps, preferable, if only as more in keeping with what is subsequently related of the Baptist. It is difficult to conceive how doubts should ever have risen in his mind if a revelation so wonderful had really come to him.

But the point to dwell on is this, the Baptist of the Fourth Gospel does shrink in comparison with the Baptist of the Synoptics. Two of the latter, as has been remarked already, picture him in his uncertainty; and this will be again touched on. True, no doubt, that the Fourth Evangelist concedes to him a real greatness; we cannot get away from the fact that the great personage is made to take lower rank. He is pictured indeed as steadfast, resolute; then it is brought home to us repeatedly that there are limitations of which he himself is profoundly conscious. We remark his own disclaimers². He is a witness, and only a

¹ Lütgert (*Die joh. Christologie*, p. 12) asks pertinently: "Wie könnte das Herabkommen des Geistes auf Jesus keine Bedeutung für Jesus selbst haben?"

² John i. 20.

witness¹. A time comes when, in view of other and greater testimony, his witness can be dispensed with². The strong soul has become, as it were, a mere "voice"³. And it would never occur to us to find a mere "voice" in the Baptist of the Synoptics. The contrast is certainly remarkable.

Here questions arise as to circumstances in which the Fourth Gospel was composed, as to objects which the Fourth Evangelist may have had in view at the time of writing, as to special needs. Many and varied are the conjectures which have been made: here, perhaps, one theory may be noted which, alluded to by Barth⁴, is at least suggestive. It has been elaborately contended that the Fourth Evangelist is mainly concerned to defend the Christian standpoint against Jewish onslaughts; more particularly against opposition on the part of later disciples of the Baptist. The purpose of the Evangelist, it is said, is at once apologetic and polemical: on the one hand he will disallow the exaggerated pretensions of those who invest their master, the Baptist, with divinity; on the other hand he will regain for Jesus Christ (who has been completely overshadowed) the acknowledged pre-eminence which is His due⁵. And these disciples of the Baptist, who and of what sort were they? Some information is

¹ John i. 7, 8, 15.

² John v. 32-36.

³ Cf. Baldensperger, *Prolog des 4. Evan.*, p. 59.

⁴ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 12.

⁵ Baldensperger, *Prolog des 4. Evan.*, pp. 153, 56.

furnished in Acts xviii. 24–xix. 4; we read there of certain men at Ephesus who, sharing the Messianic conceptions of the Christians to a certain point, had focussed their own beliefs on the person of the Baptist. If the men in question (of whom Apollos was one) were “baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus” it would not necessarily follow that every Baptist-disciple at Ephesus at once abandoned the distinctive tenets of the sect. As a matter of fact it lived on. “It is plain that in the interval between the preaching of St Paul and the Gospel of St John the memory of the Baptist at Ephesus had assumed a new attitude towards Christianity. His name is no longer the sign of imperfect appreciation, but the watchword of direct antagonism. John (i.e. the Baptist) had been set up as a rival Messiah to Jesus¹.”

There is no need to commit ourselves to the above-mentioned theory in its every detail. That the purpose of the Evangelist had a wider scope, that there were other sets of circumstances and needs which claimed his notice, may be admitted; it may equally be admitted that the theory helps us to account for the altered tone noticeable in the Fourth Gospel. Rightly does the Baptist figure in the Synoptics as the great personage; a time has arrived when it is imperative to

¹ Lightfoot, *Coloss.*, p. 401. (Baldensperger, *Prolog des 4. Evan.*, *passim.*) But cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 423. von Soden (*Early Christ. Literature*, p. 415) speaks of “an exaggerated reverence for the Baptist existing within the circle for which this Gospel was written.”

draw clear distinctions ; to establish it that, great as he was, there is One infinitely greater than he, even Jesus. Hence the second portrait drawn of him by the Fourth Evangelist. "The studied presentation of John the Baptist as a witness for Jesus has, perhaps, a special significance of its own¹":—we are disposed to omit the "perhaps" and to speak of pointed reference to Baptist-disciples at Ephesus at the time when the Gospel was composed. They had identified the forerunner, not Jesus, with the incarnate Word. They must be made to realise "the transient and subordinate character of John's ministry...the loftier claims of Jesus²."

To hazard a conjecture. The earliest Gospel (St Mark) has nothing to tell as to any embassy sent by John the Baptist to Jesus ; as has been seen already, Matthew and Luke alone record an occasion on which his faith broke down under the strain and dejection of imprisonment. May not a secondary element be recognised in the narrative in question ? Hints may be read into it that a time had come for forcible reminders as to the frailty, the inferiority, the humanity, of one already held to be divine, already deified.

Be this as it may, the conclusion appears reasonable that it is after all the self-same personage who figures in the two portraits which come to us from different

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apost. Age*, II. p. 226 ; cf. von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 415.

² Lightfoot, *Coloss.*, p. 401.

hands. In other words, the difficulty of reconciling the two accounts given of John the Baptist is not insurmountable. If there be any "violent alteration" in the case before us¹ it is upon cause shown.

IV. PRESENTMENT OF MIRACLE.

Another objection. The Fourth Gospel, it is affirmed, differs widely from the Synoptics in respect to the nature and purpose of the miracles recorded. Perhaps it is desirable that the standpoint from which the alleged contrast is here approached and treated of should be briefly and generally defined.

What do we understand by miracle?

Two conceptions obtain. According to one of them—the popular conception—the word is used of a very distortion of the wonderful². A miracle is the downright prodigy; the question is solely of occurrences therefore deemed miraculous because they utterly stagger the intellect; unintelligibility is their characteristic feature; the more improbable and contrary to experience they are, the miraculous is deemed all the more in evidence. As for the other, it is of a very different sort. The word is used in its proper significance of that which, be it never so strange, wonderful, marvellous, is not therefore contrary to reason, but

¹ O. Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, p. 40.

² Traub, *Die Wunder in N. T.*, p. 7; "eine Abart des Wunders."

which admits of explanation. The explanation may be long delayed; when once discovered it is, will be, a fuller revelation of the divine wisdom which "sweetly ordereth all things." A miracle, that is, is no violation or interruption of Law; rather is it the marvel in perfect harmony with Law not yet discerned and understood. With fuller knowledge it will remain the marvel; but wonder will then be for the beautiful methods and processes of its accomplishment. God will be manifested in it:—working along the lines which He Himself has ordained.

There need be no hesitation in choosing between the two conceptions thus roughly indicated. The former repels by its crudeness; by its demand for a credulity too often identified with a reasonable faith¹. The latter is felt instinctively to be the worthier conception, and one infinitely more compatible with loftiest thoughts of Deity. It is precisely through "a larger understanding of the range and meaning of Nature²," through a growing perception of laws pervading nature, that the human soul will bend in adoring reverence before the Wisdom, Power, Majesty, which has ordered all things³, and which is to be discerned in all things.

¹ Was it not the White Queen in *Alice through the Looking-glass* who found no difficulty in believing six impossible things before breakfast?

² A. W. Robinson, *In Memoriam*, p. xxii.

³ Traub, *Die Wunder im N. T.*, p. 6.

Such, then, is our standpoint. It implies the repudiation of "miracle" as the word is popularly understood; not by any means the repudiation of "marvel." On the contrary, we are quite prepared to meet with marvels, to allow them, to expect more of them, to rest assured that sooner or later explanations will be forthcoming. True, no doubt, that we have "become more careful, more hesitating in our judgment, in regard to the stories of the miraculous which have come down to us from antiquity": the chances are that there are some things in the Gospel narratives which we are disposed to "put quietly aside"; we say to ourselves, "perhaps you will have to leave it there for ever; perhaps the meaning will dawn upon you later, and the story will assume a significance of which you never dreamt¹." And again, to dwell on wonderful occurrences of recent times is to refrain from "saying too hastily that this or that occurrence" of a remote past is "impossible²." Further, to reflect on the mysterious power exercised by mind on mind is to cease to find difficulty in, at any rate, some of the Gospel narratives: other difficulties are, perhaps, lessened with added reflections on the influence of mind on matter. We are, in short, ready to allow that "exceptional manifestations of psychic and spiritual force...were only to be expected in a Being of excep-

¹ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* pp. 28, 29.

² Granger, *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 109.

tional elevation and fullest capacity¹”; and, as will be seen later on, precisely such a Being looms large in the Gospel pages.

Here a reminder comes of what we have seen affirmed as to two portraits of Jesus; the one drawn by the Synoptists, and the other as portrayed in the Fourth Gospel. But this is a question to have separate consideration: enough to remark now that in any case Jesus, if conceived of as mere man, admittedly towers conspicuously above men in an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God².

And so we proceed to inquire whether certain stories recorded by the Fourth Evangelist bear the stamp of authenticity. We are not pledged in advance to the acceptance of one and all by what has been said above as to a readiness to expect and to allow the marvellous. Their acceptance, on the contrary, will depend on circumstances. We may fairly stipulate for reasonably sufficient evidence. As fairly may we inquire whether there be anything which appears diametrically opposed to ascertained Law. At the same time we take account of human limitations; “although the order of Nature be inviolable, we are not yet by any means acquainted with all the forces working in it and acting reciprocally with other forces³.”

¹ A. W. Robinson, *Sermon*.

² Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 30.

³ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 27. See also Ferris, *The Growth of Christian Faith*, pp. 152 ff.

Now, the objection before us hinges on a contrast with the Synoptic Gospels. They, indeed, contain ample store of the marvellous. But, so we are told, new features are apparent in the Fourth Gospel. "John knows nothing whatever of the most frequent wonder-works of Jesus—the healing of demoniacs¹"; there is the "enhancement of miracle." In respect to purpose, nature, all seems changed.

An admission must be made; but a qualified admission. The Synoptists tell again and again of demoniacs healed by Jesus:—and we promptly allow the narratives in question: there is, indeed, unanimity of opinion that Jesus did really heal many of those who (according to the conceptions of the age) were "possessed with evil spirits²." The Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, has no such detailed narratives. The fact is patent, and we admit it; what we do not admit is that the absence of such narratives implies entire ignorance, still less contradiction. There is room for the argument that the Fourth Evangelist, assuming that his readers had independent knowledge of the "many things that Jesus did," will avoid needless repetition. But we find ground for believing that,

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 18.

² Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 28; Traub, *Die Wunder in N. T.*, p. 41; Bousset, *Jesus*, pp. 23-25. (Bousset's explanation of the Parable of the Unclean Spirit as an admission of repeated failures and relapses is certainly interesting, perhaps suggestive.)

knowing of, he confirms such Synoptic narratives; they are surely to be inferred when he tells of "many miracles" performed in and near Jerusalem (xii. 37); of crowds following Jesus because of miracles done "on them which were diseased" at the Sea of Galilee (vi. 1, 2).

What miracle-stories, then, does he detail? They are seven in number; and, in the case of some, they are not new to us. The feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the storm, and the walking on the sea, are related in the Synoptics; it may, perhaps, be the case that in the healing of the nobleman's son and of the centurion's servant we have but two versions of the self-same story. If so, there remain four miracle-stories peculiar to the Fourth Gospel: the water turned into wine; the cure at the pool of Bethesda; a man blind from his birth made to see; the raising of Lazarus¹.

A first question suggests itself. Looking to the seven stories which the Fourth Evangelist has selected for narration, is it really the case that they all point to "downright wonders of omnipotence as God alone can conjure them²"? Up to a certain point only do we allow the "enhancement of miracle"; for it quickly strikes us that there is no essential difference from what is discoverable in the Synoptics. Truly, we are

¹ By some the Resurrection is counted as the seventh Johannine miracle.

² Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 18.

not prepared to say that in every single instance Jesus is seen working "outside the domain of natural law and in defiance of it¹." Three works of healing are narrated, and we are fully alive to the special features illustrated by them; healing at a distance, congenital blindness, infirmity become chronic; we are nevertheless inclined to allow the substantial accuracy of the stories. It is quite possible that in them Jesus may be seen "operating within the domain of natural law²." Nor is the walking on the sea so easily discredited: "there are serious reasons for hesitating before we declare that a human being cannot rise in the air or float along the sea in defiance of gravity³."

On the whole, then, we find no sufficient reason for disallowing historicity in the case of miracle-stories of which two (on the supposition above alluded to) are met with in the Synoptics, two being peculiar to the Fourth Gospel.

But what of the three which remain? It does, indeed, seem that the term "wonders of Omnipotence" may be used of two of them; nor is difficulty obviated by reflecting that one is common to the Synoptic Gospels. True, no doubt, that "what is regarded as a miracle to-day may be known to be a scientific fact to-morrow⁴": the feeling remains that occurrences are

¹ Cf. Hudson, *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, p. 375.

² *Ibid.*, p. 375; cf. Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 27.

³ Granger, *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 109.

⁴ Hudson, *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, p. 373.

now related which find no "satisfactory explanation within the known laws of nature¹"; and that, apparently, conditions on which such narratives may be readily allowed are unsatisfied. That those who told of the bread obedient to the word of Jesus, and how "the modest water saw its God and blushed" had some actual occurrence in their minds is conceivable enough; we can but add that, for us, their stories are inexplicable. Inclination perhaps arises to speak of a legendary element in the narratives. And again, may not Old Testament influences be detected? At least there are remarkable coincidences: the feeding of the multitude has its parallel in the story of Elisha (2 Kings iv. 42-44): if Moses gave water in the wilderness One greater than Moses has His gift of wine.

"In the days of Jesus the allegory was the commonplace of Hellenistic Judaism²." Be it so; it is not so certain, however, that those who told of thousands fed with a few loaves were conscious allegorists all of them, whatever may be affirmed of him who tells of water changed to wine at the marriage-feast at Cana. Beyond question the stories, as they stand in the Fourth Gospel, do lend themselves to allegorical interpretation. The bread ministered by the disciples will then cease to be the bread of corn to become the Bread of Life for the soul³. Judaism will be symbolised by the wine which

¹ Hudson, *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, p. 372.

² Traub, *Die Wunder im N. T.*, p. 68.

³ *Philochristus*, pp. 213-215.

has failed, Christianity by the good wine brought in at the end; "the water of legal purification turned into the wine of marriage joy¹." "We forget the outward narrative and lose ourselves in its deeper significance²."

This story of the marriage at Cana, it is said, "has perplexed the commentators³." It was, we may agree, intended to serve as vehicle of spiritual truth; the question arises whether it (and the story of the feeding of the multitudes) may not point back to figurative utterances which came to be understood literally. With the lapse of years there would be all the force of reality in pictures of the mind.

To turn to that "most stupendous miracle⁴" of the raising of Lazarus.

"Stupendous" indeed! And yet we are inclined to suspect that the story which enshrines it may, in the main, be less beset with difficulty than the two just alluded to. They impose a serious strain on the intelligence, nor do we altogether wonder that some can only find in them the magician practising his magic arts. Not so necessarily with the Lazarus-story;

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 241; cf. Soltau, *Unsere Evan.*, p. 108; Baldensperger, *Prolog des 4. Evan.*, p. 62; O. Holtzmann, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 205.

² von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 390.

³ Davidson, *Introd. to N. T.*, II. p. 351.

⁴ Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 47. Keim (*Jesus von Nazara*, I. p. 132) remarks: "Dieses grösste Wunder hat wiederum Johannes so erzählt dass Niemand es im Buchstabensinne glauben kann."

it may again speak of One possessed of a perfect understanding of "the laws pertaining to mental therapeutics¹," One from whom "exceptional manifestations of psychic and spiritual force²" may be expected. Likely enough that it was within His capacity to deal with cases of catalepsy, suspended animation. On the assumption that actual death had supervened, may He not have been able to recall the departed soul to its earthly tenement?

Now the Synoptics relate two raisings from the dead. In each case the narrator will evidently have it understood that death has really taken place; it is still conceivable, however, that the stories of the widow's son of Nain and Jairus' daughter may be explained of trance-conditions³. May not a similar explanation hold good in the case of the story of Lazarus? Beyond doubt the narrator will affirm that Jesus was in the presence of death itself: the question occurs whether the account he deems adequate is equally adequate to us who have higher scientific knowledge. That grave at Bethany; did it really contain a corpse in the first stages of corruption, or a still living man in a death-like state of trance⁴?

¹ Hudson, *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, p. 354.

² A. W. Robinson, *Sermon*.

³ "She is not dead, but sleepeth."

⁴ Wrede (*Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangelium*, p. 7) writes: "Lazarus' Leiche strömt bereits Verwesungsgeruch aus ehe er erweckt wird." But did it?

In any case the story has its difficulties. Full, indeed, is it of "minute touches¹"; it is so "vivid and circumstantial in its character²" that it appears well-nigh impossible to regard it with suspicion. To read it again and again, with closest scrutiny, is to be struck by, if not "incongruous³" at any rate, singular features in it. There is that exquisite "Jesus wept," the remarkable expression rendered "groaned in the spirit" with the "troubled himself" that follows:— it may perhaps be asked: why this grief, this almost wrath, this shuddering on the part of Jesus when He knew to a certainty that "he that was dead" would come forth alive at the spoken word of power⁴? And again, the thought may occur to some that there is an anti-climax in the story for all its pathos and beauty.

¹ Westcott, *St John*, p. 163; cf. Peabody, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 120.

² McClymont, *St John (Century Bible)*, p. 233.

³ Davidson, *Introd. to N. T.*, II. p. 359.

⁴ Treating of the raising of Jairus' daughter, Hudson (*Law of Psychic Phenomena*, pp. 351 ff.) affirms that the mysterious power of suggestion is so exercised as to reveal perfect knowledge of the mental conditions necessary; faith inspired in the father; adverse influence of incredulity guarded against; while weeping relatives are excluded three strong believers are brought in; the "not dead, but sleepeth" is not merely an assurance to others, but a powerful suggestion to the damsel's mind: the way is carefully prepared for the energetic command "I say unto thee, arise." Up to a certain point similar remarks might, perhaps, be made in the case of the Lazarus-story. But are not "adverse suggestions" also noticeable?—the mental environment disturbed by the grief, the wrath, the shudder of Jesus?

On the one hand it points to "that higher eternal life which Jesus, in other places besides, claims to bestow on all who believe, a life which dwells in them even now, and because it is a life eternal and divine, survives the temporal death"; on the other hand it seems to place us, as it were, on a lower level by pointing to the earthly life to which Lazarus was raised again from the grave, to the mere prolongation of that earthly life¹. The sequel to that splendid "I am the Resurrection and the Life" might appear—shall we venture to say it?—poorer than we should have expected.

The Fourth Gospel has been recognised as a unity; otherwise we should be disposed to agree that "the story has not been struck out at one stroke of the die, that it embodies certain elements which do not accord with the Evangelist's general conception of the event, that he has taken them up into his own narrative as elements of a secure tradition, that he has not apprehended them in their original meaning²." As it is, the mind reverts to certain elements from which such a story might have been elaborated. There is the parable which alludes to a return from the dead, and it is the only parable in which a character is mentioned by name;—he whom Dives will have sent from Abraham's bosom is none other than a Lazarus. The sister-pair have figured already in a Synoptic Gospel. The

¹ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Synoptics have prepared the way with their stories of the widow's son of Nain and Jairus' daughter¹. If it be really some consummate artist who paints that "poetic picture" which has rivetted the gaze of thousands, there is material in plenty for his canvas. On the assumption that he was allegorising—well, thoughts come of the moral change figured by St Paul as a death, a burial, a resurrection: "dead indeed unto sin...alive unto God."

And yet somehow the conviction grows on us that the story is not to be explained away in this fashion. That it has an allegorical purpose and significance may be allowed; if in tones of "tender and unearthly beauty" it bids us

"Behold a man raised up by Christ,"

it is surely permissible to apply it to those who

".....rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,"

to the once "buried life" quickened into the activity of divinest service. The question remains whether it was consciously penned as allegory in the first instance². It is possible to regard it as embodying recollections, blurred perhaps, of something which had actually taken place—and, it may well be, in the narrator's presence. As for the description given by him, it may be coloured by the beliefs and opinions

¹ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, pp. 108, 109.

² Cf. Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz &c.*, p. 6.

of his own day; quite probable that for our day the description would have to be modified, worded differently. For him it was the downright miracle; we should apprehend it as a marvel. In other words, the story may point to fact, but what precisely the fact was is impossible to determine¹.

It is certainly curious that the story of an event which leads so directly up to the closing scenes finds no place in the Synoptics². The argument from silence is, however, to be used warily at all times; here, in particular, the need of caution should be realised. There is, to begin with, no question of three independent authorities testifying, by their silence, against the historicity of the Lazarus-story; there is but one fundamental authority, viz. St Mark's Gospel. And again, the element of completeness is wanting in all the records of the life of Jesus.

To sum up. Our conceptions of the miraculous have changed; at the same time we may allow that the miracle (in the popular sense of the word) had its purpose in the divine providence as a means of inspiring and confirming faith. It follows that we are not taken aback if this special purpose be accentuated by the

¹ Delff (*Rabbi Jesus*, pp. 396 ff.) by no means discredits the story, while not finding fault with those who prefer to think of the death-like trance.

² For Wernle their silence is decisive. *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 24; cf. Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 63.

Fourth Evangelist. He is aware of those more intelligible works of healing which the Synoptics had detailed sufficiently; for himself he will deliberately select just those "signs" which he judges to have highest value and significance. Nor does his selection point exclusively to "works of omnipotence as God alone can conjure them"; for, in the first place, the "enhancement of miracle" is not quite so marked as critics have assumed, and secondly, of the "signs" recorded at least five seem capable of being explained by the mighty influences of "a strong will and a firm faith¹." Two only occasion real difficulty and perplexity; and even in their case we are slow to use the words incredible, impossible. Scientific knowledge is still circumscribed. And besides; "behind the alleged miracles of the Gospels we have the absolutely greatest spiritual force that the world has ever known²."

There is one thing more to be said. If strict historicity be no characteristic feature of these stories in their every detail, it does not necessarily follow that the author is dependent on second-hand knowledge. Rather do they reveal numerous, significant traces of an old man's memory as he lives again in the past, and tells, as an old man would tell, of the things which he saw and heard³. He may not tell his story with

¹ Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 27.

² Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 177.

³ Cf. Peabody, *The Fourth Gospel &c.*, pp. 117-119.

scientific accuracy; but, whoever he be, he strikes us as an eye-witness. There need be no hesitation in adding, "he employed stories for his own ends¹."

V. THE DISCOURSES.

Is the Fourth Gospel a reliable document in respect to the conversations, discourses, sayings, which it purports to relate?

We are met by decided answers in the negative. A sharp contrast between the Synoptic representation and that of the later Gospel is insisted on. The dissimilarity, it is said, is patent throughout; it is specially glaring in what is put into the mouth of Jesus. In respect alike to form and subject-matter the two representations are at variance: they cannot both be true to fact; to accept the one is, of necessity, to reject the other. "Jesus must have spoken just as the Synoptists make him speak²"; His utterances, as reported by the Fourth Evangelist, have been transformed "into the theological and philosophical language of the schools³."

Of such sort are the numerous objections. Whether stated briefly or at length they are reiterated in almost

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 396.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 372.

³ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 441. Keim (*Jesus von Nazara*, i. p. 112) says: "Jesus selbst ist zum subtilsten Dogmatiker geworden."

identical terms:—"to discourse in Synoptic and Johannine fashion is precisely what Jesus did not do¹"; "a Jesus who preached alternately in the manner of the Sermon on the Mount and of John xiv.-xvii. is a psychological impossibility; the distinction between his so-called exoteric and esoteric teaching a palpable absurdity²." There is, by the way, a strong family likeness between recent objections and those dating from the opening of the attack on the Fourth Gospel³. Take, for instance, the pronouncement of a modern critic: "in place of the popular form of oriental proverb-wisdom and inventive parable, the profound allegory with its appeal to matured reflection; instead of sayings pithy and concise, luminous and easy of retention, a sequence of witnessings and disputings in an exalted tone and marked by an utter disregard of the capacity of the hearers...with the Synoptics Jesus makes demands for self-renunciation, compassionate love, the taking of self in hand, work for others, he warns against the danger of riches, of worldly desires and anxieties, above all he preaches about the Kingdom of God and the conditions of entrance to it; in the Fourth Gospel the preaching of the Kingdom recedes from view, Jesus is the dialectician who treats in singular and anything but popular style of his own divinity. In

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 24.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 421.

³ Cf. B. Weiss, *Einleitung*, pp. 611 ff.

both cases he appears as teacher; in the Fourth Gospel he is himself almost exclusively subject of his teaching¹." And then compare with it the pronouncement of a critic of nearly a hundred years ago:—"Jesus, as pictured by the earlier gospels, never employs dialectic skill, the ambiguity of artifice, a mystical style, whether he be speaking, preaching, or disputing; on the contrary there is the utmost simplicity, clearness, a certain natural eloquence which owes far more to the genius of the mind than to acquired art. In the Fourth Gospel he disputes as the dialectician, his speech is ambiguous, his style mystical, he deals in obscurities, so much so that even very learned people are quite in the dark as to the real meaning of many of his sayings. In the one case there are short and pregnant utterances, parables so beautiful and of such inward truth that they grip the attention and sink deep into the soul; in the other the parabolic style of teaching is practically absent. In the one case the question turns on conduct, on rules of life, the Mosaic law, errors of the Jewish people; in the other the speaker is concerned with dogma, with metaphysics, with his own divine nature and dignity²." The resemblance is unmistakable; as it is detected again and again

¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Einleit.*, pp. 430, 431; cf. Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 19 ("Statt der Sache überall nur die Person"); von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 409 ff.

² Bretschneider, *Probabilia &c.*, pp. 1, 2.

the supposition is pardonable that one objector after another has either contented himself with arguments that have become traditional, or gone for inspiration to the one fountain-head. As in substance, so in wording, the indictments are certainly very near akin.

The question is: are they purely fanciful or well-founded?

It may be noted here that the contrast expatiated on was felt (not in respect of the discourses only) at a far earlier period¹. For the "Fénelon of Germany" (Herder) the Fourth Gospel was "an echo of the older gospels in sublimer chorus"; we retrace our steps from the eighteenth century to the sixteenth; if for Luther it be "the one tender right chief gospel" an explanation again will be that its peculiarity was apprehended. But to go a long way further back still: if Origen accounts it the "firstling of all scripture," Clement of Alexandria is quick to distinguish it as the "spiritual gospel." A reason will surely be this, its characteristic features of style and subject-matter have impressed him. He does not therefore proceed to an opinion unfavourable to the Gospel.

Another thing may be remarked. Short, pithy, pregnant, it is said, are the sayings which come from the lips, not of the Johannine, but of the Synoptic

¹ Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Einleit.*, p. 427.

Jesus. Very similar is the description which comes down from the second century, and from one whose allusions to "memoirs of the Apostles" imply a knowledge of the four Gospels. The speaker is Justin Martyr: he will tell of "the very doctrine delivered by Christ Himself"; he goes on to say: "short and sententious are His discourses, no trifling sophister was He¹." The Fourth Gospel may have had its contrasts for him; the inference is that he was able to reconcile them, at all events to his own satisfaction.

We ask: how does the case really stand? In attempting to answer we begin with a rapid survey of the Gospel as a whole.

Allusion has been made already to a certain monotony which runs through it, a sameness in manner of presentment. The sameness, the monotony, are, it must be confessed, illustrated in the speeches of those who play their parts in the wonderful drama which is made to unfold itself. It may be true that the Fourth Evangelist has succeeded in investing the several personages with an individuality which is all their own. Rich is his narrative in "distinct personal types" of character; "the vividness, the vigour, the life, of their portraitures cannot be mistaken or gainsaid.

¹ Justin Mart., *Apol.*, I. 18; cf. Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 20: "It is not true, then, that the Johannine Christ speaks like a Sophist, and abstains from using brief and concise sayings."

The different personages shew themselves. They come forward and then pass out of sight as living men, and not like characters in a legendary history¹." Well and good: it may, however, be argued and conceded that they are brought forward to serve a purpose², and that as soon as their purpose is served they are allowed to vanish without word or hint as to their subsequent history³; for the time being, at any rate, they are men and women of real flesh and blood. Situation, attitude, temperament, turn of mind, are delineated in graphic touches. All this may readily be granted; at once it must be added that it is just when they begin to speak that a strangely uniform note becomes perceptible. It is not merely that they have one and all the same topic, that "the theme is for ever the same, Jesus Himself⁴." The subject of inquiry or debate may be diverse; there is little, if any, variety in the manner of the discourse. The language is admittedly Johannine⁵. If the Fourth Evangelist has indeed "fashioned a speech

¹ Westcott, *St John*, pp. lxxi., lxxv.; cf. Barth, *Das Johannes-evangelium*, p. 30. von Soden (*Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 390 f.) will scarcely assent: "The characters appear in a strange twilight... they profess to be actual personalities, yet live only the life of typical characters." So also Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannes-evangelium*, p. 21.

² Cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 388.

³ "Our author loses the whole of his interest in both persons and situations as soon as they have served his doctrinal purpose." von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 398.

⁴ Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 29, 30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32. See also Thoma, *Genesis des Ev. Joh.*, p. 345.

peculiar to his school¹," his characters hold converse in its phraseology.

Again, and in close connection with what has just been said. As a result of this sameness of style and diction it is often far from easy to determine who the speaker really is. The words flow on in a continuous stream, subject-matter may remain unchanged, there is a sequence of thought; at the same time there is now and again ground for the conjecture that the one whose voice is heard is not the character who has been speaking hitherto but another. That other will be the Evangelist himself. He has a way, that is, of narrating some conversation or discourse, and of merging his own reflections in it².

Yet another thing is observable. Scenes and incidents are so narrated as to suggest that those alone are present who are expressly mentioned; the conversations, however, are reported with the precision of an eye-witness, of one who has actually listened to the spoken words. Of this there are at least three striking instances: the night-visit of Nicodemus³, the talk with

¹ von Dobschütz, *Christian Life &c.*, p. 222; cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 392.

² Thus, e.g., in John iii. 16-22; 31-36: which probably contain not words of Jesus and the Baptist, but ponderings of the Evangelist. Cf. Reuss, *Geschichte der heil. Schriften N. T.*, p. 208, "Zudem verschwimmen die ihm (Jesus) geliehenen Worte öfters mit den eigenen Reflexionen des Verfassers"; von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 412; Weizsäcker, *Apost. Age*, II. 225.

³ John iii. 1-16.

the woman of Samaria¹, the questioning by Pilate². In two of them the presence of a third person may perhaps be inferred: of one who, as intimate friend of the Jewish ruler, had arranged the interview, who, closely attached to Jesus, had stayed on with his Master when the disciples went away to buy provisions³. No such inference seems possible in the third instance; but for the military guard Pilate would be alone with Jesus. It has been urged that the soldiers would be eagerly questioned later on as to what had taken place between Roman governor and august prisoner; but even so there could hardly be question of a report given and set down with entire accuracy. Where inference alone is possible the conclusion appears inevitable that the Fourth Evangelist does sometimes amplify from his own conceptions as to what would be said by the respective personages. The conclusion has been stated thus: "few will deny that in this Gospel the prerogative of the ancient historian to place in the mouth of his characters discourses reflecting his own idea of what was suitable to the occasion, has been used to the limit⁴." The least that can be said is that the narrative is coloured by the idealism of the narrator.

Points such as these refuse to be ignored. They compel to some admissions in respect to the Fourth

¹ John iv. 7-26.

² John xviii. 33-37.

³ But cf. Reuss, *Geschichte des N. T.*, p. 208.

⁴ Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 257; cf. Barth, *Das Johännesevangelium*, p. 32.

Gospel as a whole. If an element of subjectivity be discernible in the Synoptics¹ (and no doubt such is the case), it is met with in an enhanced degree in the pages of the Fourth Gospel. The speakers cannot, one and all, have expressed themselves in exactly the same style; if the thoughts and ideas be theirs the words in which thoughts and ideas are clothed will often be those of the Evangelist himself. And again, if there were occasions when he was not in the presence of the speakers, that which they are made to say will then be the imagined utterance. He has dared, that is, to exercise a considerable amount of freedom; and, for some, this very freedom is one of many conclusive proofs of Apostolic authorship. No one but an Apostle, it is argued, would have dared to take such liberties in the representation.

Be this as it may, the admissions made in respect to the Fourth Gospel generally are in no wise to be withdrawn when the question turns in particular on the discourses of Jesus as reported in it. They must still be adhered to. What will they now carry with them?

The question demands an honest, candid answer. And the only answer possible is this: the Fourth Evangelist displays a "sovereign indifference" to the mere letter. He is no stenographer who takes down

¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Einleit.*, p. 441; cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, pp. 368 ff.

verbatim and with practised hand sentences as they come directly from the speaker's lips, and who reproduces them for the press with verbal accuracy. His may, no doubt, be the trained memory, the retentive Jewish mind; the suggestion has been made that heads of discourses actually heard by him were jotted down at the time¹ and carefully preserved: it is none the less true that he has allowed himself full liberty of expansion, perhaps of condensation². Concerned to give the substance of what has been either spoken in his presence or told him subsequently, he does not hesitate to give it in a form which is of his own devising. His individuality is impressed on all his reports of the sayings and discourses of Jesus. The language is his own.

It follows that the Fourth Gospel is not throughout a depository of the very words of Jesus as originally spoken. Actual sayings of His are, no doubt, enshrined in it, the gist of what He said on many an occasion, kernels of discourses. Of word for word reports there can be no question.

The admission forced upon us is, then, very nearly this: "Jesus cannot have had, at the same time, the

¹ Michaelis, *Lectures on the N. T.*, p. 240. Strauss (*Life of Jesus*, p. 382) notices an opinion of Bertholdt to the same effect. But see B. Weiss, *Einleitung*, p. 605, note.

² Luther's comment on one passage might serve for others: "St Joh. fasset diese Predigt kurz mit wenig Worten, aber der Herr Christus wird sie viel reichlicher und hübscher ausgestrichen haben." (*Werke*, XLVIII. 164.)

style and method of teaching which the Synoptists describe and that which the Fourth Gospel reflects. We must therefore attribute the language, the colour, and the form of these Johannine discourses to the Evangelist. The Gospel of John is a distillation of the life and teaching of Jesus from the alembic of the Apostle's own mind. It is his interpretation of the meaning of Christ's words, deeds, and person, derived from intimate personal relations with him, and coloured and shaped by a long life of Christian thought and experience¹."

It will be remarked that the writer just quoted affirms the Apostolic authorship; further, that, referring to the person of Jesus, he points to a subject to be dealt with in another section. As for his opening sentence, it will presently be reverted to; it will have to be modified in order to gain acceptance. What he says in the main may be unhesitatingly assented to. The author of the Fourth Gospel is, very probably, one who has lived a long life, many and varied have been his experiences, the scenes and conditions of his old age are very different from those of his earlier manhood, he has learnt many a lesson—in earlier days from Jesus—later on from his great predecessor in Asia Minor. He has pondered much, and light has broken in upon him from many quarters. The result is that new and great conceptions have taken hold of him;

¹ Stevens, *Theology of N. T.*, p. 172.

they influence his mode of speech, his style of writing. Of such a one it is not to be expected that he will have retained every saying of Jesus precisely as it was spoken¹; still less that he will mechanically indite every remembered or recorded line and syllable. It would be altogether foreign to his genius, his type of mind, to allow himself to be the mere automaton. He will, indeed, pen "living memories," but he will pen them in his own words.

The discourses of Jesus, as reported in the Fourth Gospel, are, then, "a distillation of the teaching of Jesus from the alembic of the" Evangelist's "own mind."

To revert to the opening sentence of the passage above quoted. That there is a contrast between the Synoptic and Johannine representation of the preaching and teaching of Jesus may be admitted; does it entirely justify the assertion that "Jesus cannot have had, at the same time, the style and method" described by the Synoptists and reflected by the Fourth Gospel²? Is a Jesus who can adopt the two styles and methods really "a psychological impossibility"?

The question shall be considered, briefly, under two heads: the form of the teaching; its subject-matter.

First, then, as to the form. An explanation of the

¹ Cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 34; J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 138. See also B. Weiss, *Einleitung*, p. 605.

² Kaftan (*Das Evan. des Joh.*, in *Die Christliche Welt*, No. 17) says of the Syn. representation: "So hat Jesus gesprochen und gelehrt, wie es uns hier entgegentritt."

contrast is already to hand; the recognised subjectivity of the Fourth Evangelist, the fact that he is in no way concerned to reproduce the past with scrupulous regard to accuracy. A further explanation occurs to us as we think of powers possessed by living men to adapt themselves to their environment; to "speak in the vernacular" to ruder minds, to reserve their more abstruse arguments for cultured and reflective hearers. There is the gift of racy simplicity, the gift of profundity; if seen now-a-days—in rare instances perhaps—combined in the same individual, why deny them, in their combination, in the case of Jesus? If He be but one towering conspicuously above His fellow-men there is surely good reason to concede them to Him; to feel persuaded that He will use now one and now the other as the exigencies of locality and circumstance may require. And there are exigencies which go some way to explain the marked difference in style and method: the difference is conditioned by that of the people with whom Jesus has to do in this place and that; the difference between them, again, being conditioned by a difference of scene. Away in Galilee—where the scene is so largely laid by the Synoptists—those to whom Jesus will address Himself are "the multitude," the poor, the weary and the heavy-laden, unlearned and simple folk, sheep having no shepherd; His very disciples are of the same sort; if He dispute with Scribes and Pharisees He is ever mindful of the limited com-

prehension of the bystanders; He confines Himself to the concrete, and draws His similitudes from the objects of nature, the events of social life. In Jerusalem—the scene as laid for the more part in the Fourth Gospel—the audience is of another sort; those with whom Jesus has now to do are no longer simple, uninstructed folk, but practised theologians of the Temple schools, and His discourses are framed accordingly. Well might He be as it were one person in Galilee and quite another in Jerusalem: to the Galilaean populace a man of the people; to scholars of Jerusalem one of their own number¹. It was there that His deeper teaching would naturally be given—to “cultured and responsible people” as distinguished from the “motley crowd” in Galilee².

His deeper teaching. Depth not only in respect of style and method; depth also in respect of substance, topic. If the contrast in form has been to some extent accounted for (and we cannot but believe that it has), what can be said now as to the contrast in subject-matter?

Again we dwell on the subjectivity which is a feature of the Fourth Gospel; it is to find much explained by it. At once we see questions raised which, connected, as they are, with the two portraits of Jesus, must be deferred for subsequent consideration.

¹ Delff, *Rabbi Jesus*, pp. 138, 139. But see Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, p. 41.

² Swete, *Studies in the Teaching of our Lord*, p. 130.

For the time being our inquiry shall be strictly limited to points raised by the contention that the Johannine discourses of Jesus leave men utterly in the lurch when it comes to the vitally important question: what is it that God looks for? what is it that is alone decisive for life or death? There is, we are told, the answer of the Fourth Gospel:—believe on the Son of God who came down from heaven, believe that this Son of God is Jesus;—an answer, it is added, which has had a baneful influence on the history of Christendom, for it is only too easy to profess the belief without drawing a step nearer to God, without becoming a better man. Far different, it is further urged, is the answer which comes from the sayings of the Synoptic Jesus:—he only who does the will of God has a place in God's Kingdom; who is for Jesus mother, brother, sister. And in what the will of God consists is plain and clear to read: uprightness, brotherly love, trust in God, humility, a yearning after God's Kingdom. Of all that there is practically not a single word in the pages of the Fourth Evangelist:—instead of the real issues the person of Jesus is alone in evidence¹.

There is something in all this that is, no doubt, exceedingly attractive at first sight. It might appeal to those who are content to take their stand with Pope:

“For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight;
He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.”

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, pp. 31, 19.

Attention will, likely enough, be called to instances, not infrequent, where the comforting promises of the Johannine discourses have been glibly appropriated by those whose life has not been too strictly in accordance with a profession of religion postponed to the last illness, perhaps to dying moments. We remember the old adage, *abusus non tollit usum*; then we too maintain that it is in the last degree important that right conduct should be emphasised and insisted upon. All the same it occurs to us that, however attractive the contention now under consideration may appear on the surface, it falls a long way short of accounting for phenomena discernible in the history of the past nineteen centuries. Why was it, we ask, that "Christianity was a great crisis of civilisation"? as the reply comes, "because it changed the internal man, creeds, sentiments; because it regenerated the moral man, the intellectual man¹," we are constrained to expect that He who founded it should be more than a great moral teacher. His personality, it seems to us, must also be taken into account. It is not only a question of how and what He taught, but of what He was Himself; He—admittedly the greatest spiritual force that the world has ever known.

But this is to anticipate. Agreed that the earlier Gospels are characterised by a greater diffuseness when the question turns on teaching with regard to morals,

¹ Guizot, *Hist. of Civilisation*, 1. 12; cf. Barth, *Das Johannes-evangelium*, p. 44.

behaviour, personal conduct, it is not so certain that the latest Gospel is altogether silent. Agreed that the latest Gospel finds its theme continually in the person of Jesus, it may still be true that the earlier Gospels point also in the same direction. There may be, after all, weight in the remark: "plainly there was nothing further from the mind of the Synoptic Jesus than the idea that virtue was a something that might be taught¹."

There are two ways of emphasising a point. The one is to enlarge on it, to discuss it in all its bearings, to bring out its full meaning by copious illustration; the other is to formulate some short incisive aphorism which strikes home with telling effect, which incites to reflection, which prompts to action. If the former method be that adopted by the Synoptists, the latter has been preferred by the Fourth Evangelist. He too will establish it that if the Jesus of whom he tells requires belief in Himself He also makes a demand for conduct in perfect harmony with and inspired by the belief professed. How, then, does he do it? By using an expression which is packed with a whole world of meaning, by making Jesus say: "he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God²." "Doeth truth!"—in that one pregnant saying the whole root

¹ Delff, *Rabbi Jesus*, p. 177.

² John iii. 21 (cf. vii. 17—to which Wernle refers; *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 23).

of the matter is indeed contained. "Right action is right thought realised¹." The importance of right action is, then, insisted on by the Johannine Jesus. Well has it been said: "it is precisely in John's Gospel that the thoroughly practical spirit of early Christianity makes itself felt most powerfully; the Word has become true man, as such He has revealed the Father, together with the revelation of the Truth (that is, the moral being of God), He has also taught men to do the Truth—that is, to follow the will of God, to love God and to love the brethren also²." And again: a "thoroughly practical Christianity" is "mirrored" in the Fourth Gospel³.

Yet one thing more. It were easy to enumerate passages in the Synoptic Gospels in which Jesus is seen, as it were, pointing to Himself, assuming a position, an authority, which implied His claims to the reverence of men. If the Jesus of the Fourth Evangelist is discovered more frequently discoursing of Himself, His person, and His claims, one reason at any rate is not far to seek. He is not in Galilee, but in Jerusalem. What more natural than that, asserting

¹ Westcott, *St John*, p. 57.

² von Dobschütz, *Das Apostol. Zeitalter*, pp. 68, 69.

³ von Dobschütz, *Christian Life &c.*, p. 231. See also Wetzel, *Die geschichtliche Glaubwürdigkeit der im Evan. Joh. enthaltenen Reden Jesu*, *Neue Kirch. Zeitschr.*, xiv. 1903, p. 674. "An klaren, aufs Praktische und Sittliche gerichteten Stücken fehlt es auch im Evan. Joh. nicht."

His Messiahship, He should have discoursed of Himself at the headquarters of Judaism, and in language which, abstruse as it might be for some, was by no means unintelligible to cultured Jewish hearers?

To sum up in fewest words. A marked contrast between Synoptic and Johannine representation of the discourses of Jesus must be frankly recognised. It is in some part to be explained by the difference of locality, of audience; in respect to both form and subject-matter the teaching suited to Galilee would be quite unsuitable at Jerusalem, and *vice versa*. If Jesus be no more than "the greatest man that ever lived" it is far from being a "psychological impossibility" that He should, on occasion, have at least varied the manner and the matter of His discourse. The method is, beyond question, diverse; it remains true that, in both cases, He is seen directing attention to Himself; making highest demands for an uprightness of heart and life. But this is no sufficient explanation. The contrast is mainly to be accounted for by the greater subjectivity of the Fourth Evangelist; who records, not *ipsissima verba*, but the substance of the teaching of Jesus, and records it in his own way. "Recent criticism is steadily tending to the conclusion that the form in which the discourses of Christ are recorded in the Fourth Gospel is, in part, due to the Evangelist himself. Say what we will about differences of audience and of situation demanding different forms of address, and allowing for

exceptional instances, the contrast between the terse, axiomatic sayings, the simple parables of the Synoptics and the elaborate arguments of the Johannine discourses, is too great to be explained away. For myself, I believe that these wonderful discourses suggest at every point their own authenticity as regards the substance of their teaching; yet I cannot but think that the form in which that teaching is presented reflects the habits of thought of the Greek society, for whose benefit they were at first committed to writing¹."

With which remarks we can but admit general agreement.

VI. THE SYNOPTIC JESUS AND THE JOHANNINE CHRIST.

We come to the two portraits of Jesus. It is said that they are totally unlike; that the Jesus of the Synoptics is no longer recognisable in the Christ as conceived of and pictured by the Fourth Evangelist. The contrast has been thus stated: "the one has almost nothing to bring forward as to his divine nature, and, judging by his utterances, will solely describe himself as endowed with divine gifts, sent by God, Messiah; as for the other he makes everything turn on himself, pre-exist-

¹ J. H. Bernard, Church Congress Paper (Bristol, 1903).

ence is claimed, one with God he has shared the divine glory, he had come down from heaven in all the fulness of divine knowledge and might, he is about to return speedily to the throne on high¹."

The foregoing criticism is nearly a century old. It has been adopted and adapted, reiterated alike in form and substance by many a critic of later times. Never does the Synoptic Jesus "step outside the bounds of the purely human²"; in the Fourth Gospel we have the "unfathomable mystery of Jesus, his pre- and post-existence³." "The Johannine Christ is complete from the very first, for him there is no childhood and youth, he is all along the divine Word manifested in the flesh. Every trace of that development, that battling and struggling, which betoken the growing Son of God of the Synoptics, is for the most part expunged and weakened, characteristically transformed and renovated; whatever bespeaks dependence, the stories of the birth and youth; whatever points to foreknowledge lacking and to failure, the choice of the traitor Judas; whatever to real passivity, Gethsemane and Golgotha⁴." "In the Synoptics we have the man Jesus of Nazareth, charged

¹ Bretschneider, *Probabilia*, p. 2.

² Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 98.

³ Soltan, *Unsere Evangelien &c.*, p. 111.

⁴ H. J. Holtzmann, *Einleit.*, p. 432; cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 390; von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 392; Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz &c.*, pp. 31, 37. "Es ist ein wandelnder Gott der geschildert wird."

indeed by God with the Messianic calling and endued with spiritual power, but even in his moments of highest exaltation and God-consciousness alive to the distance at which he is removed from God and bowing in lowliest reverence before Him like every other child of man. With the Fourth Evangelist he is the God by whom the world was made, God with God from all eternity, come down to earth for our salvation but ever conscious of his divine origin and dignity, revealing the power of God in his wonders of omnipotence, if he prays it is not for himself but for the sake of bystanders, of his own free will he goes to that death which is entirely within his own power, from death he returns in glory to the Father after the confession has come from disciple-lips: 'my Lord and my God.'" "*In fine*, the difference between the Christ-portraits may be expressed in the simple formula: here man—there God¹."

This last criticism, be it remembered, comes from the very one who has told, and in all reverence, of a gaze which is to-day fixed on Jesus; of overpowering feelings that this same Jesus has a message for the modern world, that the modern world cannot do without

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 25. Weinel writes: "in the fourth gospel...we have a version—or perversion—of the Master's life by a disciple who has portrayed Him not in His self-sacrificing love...but as the mighty superhuman being demanding recognition of the Divine Sonship and Messianic glory." (*St Paul, the Man and his Work*, p. 320.)

Him¹. In substantial and beautiful agreement is the summing-up of another whose critical standpoint is identical: Jesus is indeed "leader to God for every period and for every people." "The world's history is responsive with its Yea, Amen." As for ourselves, "if we do but strive to be absorbed in His figure there will come to us an exaltation of the soul. Then is it that we shall in truth have got down to the very depths of our own spiritual, personal existence²."

There is assuredly no thought of banishing the Lord Christ from the world's life on the part of those who have but one answer to the question: "is the Synoptic or the Johannine Christ the Christ of history³?" They cannot, indeed, recognise the historical Jesus in the pages of the Fourth Gospel; they do assert His supreme claims to reverence, to devotion. Pointing to Him as "yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever," inspirer, leader and guide of humanity, they too will make avowal—qualified it may be—of that earliest Christian creed: "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Are we called upon to supply deficiencies in their confession; to emphasise, with no uncertain sound, a meaning to be read into that credal statement?

The duty, be it said, is not here required of us. Strong, indeed, may be our own convictions; if we

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 1.

² Bousset, *Jesus*, pp. 102, 103. See also Arno Neumann, *Jesus*, p. 171.

³ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 27.

refuse to state them, to argue in support of them, the reason is simply this, that we are not concerned now with Christian apologetics but with historical criticism. The province of dogmatic theology shall be ruled outside the range of the present inquiry. It will, indeed, take us on to holy ground. Deep seriousness is called for; a full realisation that momentous questions are raised in turning from recorded sayings of Jesus to the person of Jesus Himself. Of such momentous questions there can be no discussion in these pages; no attempts to treat exhaustively and confidently of "the divinity of our Lord."

Agreed, then, as to limits, we proceed with our inquiry. The questions before us are these: are the Synoptic and Johannine portraits of Jesus so totally unlike as they are said to be? Is there really ground for the categorical "either...or¹!" which requires that if the one be held true to life the other must be deemed imaginary and unreal? May it not, on the other hand, be possible to detect common features, to account for the difference of representation?

An admission shall be made forthwith. The two portraits are utterly unlike—*as they have been described to us*. If the descriptions be absolutely reliable, exact in their every detail, given by those whose artist-eye enables them to form a correct judgment of the artist's finished work and to pen appreciations as art-critics of the front

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 26.

rank, it would scarcely be worth while to go on with the inquiry. *Cudit quaestio*; the subjects of the portraits are altogether different. "Here man—there God"; such, it would seem, is the only conclusion possible if the descriptions given be accepted without demur. But demur we cannot but make. It is not that we doubt the good faith, the sincerity, the learning, of those who lay stress on the marked contrast presented by the Synoptic and Johannine representation of Jesus; far from it. We simply decline to rest content with being told, no matter by whom, what the portraits are like. We would view them for ourselves; study them and compare them. At any rate attempts must be made to distinguish between style and style, to appreciate the thoughts and conceptions of the respective artists, to decide as to the subject portrayed on the two canvasses. Then we would venture an opinion of our own; and it may, or may not, coincide with that so confidently pronounced by others. In the former case the admission made a moment ago in guarded terms will hold good; in the latter it will have to be still more highly qualified if not absolutely withdrawn.

Without further delay, then, we approach the two portraits. As for the one discoverable in the pages of the Fourth Evangelist, we decide that closer study of it shall be reserved to the last. The other looms large in the Synoptic Gospels; it stands full in view in that earliest of the three which contains "what we may

call, without disparagement to the veracity of any additions found in the several Gospels, the most valuable and authentic recital of the story of Jesus Christ¹." The reference, here, shall be to the Mark Gospel, and we begin by contemplating Jesus as He is pictured in it.

Clearly the portrait is of one whose every feature bears the impress of a true humanity. We remark in passing that stories of the birth and childhood are absent; the Jesus of the Marcan narrative has arrived at manhood when He comes upon the scene. Of a truth the experiences common to our race are shared by Him; He is stirred by emotions; He is conscious of physical needs. Hungry and thirsty He eats and drinks with disciples and with friends. The strain of continuous action tells on Him; He falls asleep in the ship, He will fain seek quietude and repose. He is capable of pity; "moved with compassion" by the spectacle of disease and pain². He is "acquainted with grief"; and not merely as Himself sufferer, but mourning that which he discerns in others. Strong are His sympathies and His passions; He can win affection and bestow His love; He can be stern; He is moved to wrath. He meets with failure and rebuff. The reception accorded Him by those among whom He has lived as the village carpenter causes Him surprise,

¹ Cf. Bp. of Ripon, *Introd. to the Study of the Scriptures*, p. 130.

² "Der Menschheit ganzer Jammer fasst mich an." *Faust*.

renders Him incapable of action. He requires to be informed on this point or that; accordingly He puts questions. His knowledge has limits which He Himself owns. Great spiritual crises come to Him; the meaning and power of temptation are realised. For ever pointing to the Heavenly Father He is Himself dependent on the Heavenly Father; He must go apart for communion with God, He cannot do without prayer. There are dread hours when the strength which comes from prayer seems to fail Him. He is well-nigh crushed by the anticipation of the fate in store for Him. In Gethsemane deep terror seizes Him; He pleads and hopes for deliverance from those who are compassing His death. Not till flight is impossible does He nerve Himself, and even then He almost expostulates with His captors. Easily is the arrest made, and the now friendless prisoner conducted to the high priest's presence. Bitter is the cry which comes from Him in His dying moments: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

We have accentuated, not exaggerated, features in the Marcan portrait which reveal the humanity of Jesus. Verily He is one like unto ourselves. The descriptions of Him as invested with not merely the form but the temperament of manhood which have been given us are therefore warranted. It is a real man who looks down on us from St Mark's canvas.

The question is: have we as yet done full justice to

the portrait? That some of the features thus far noted are sharply defined is a certainty; the vividness of their delineation is, however, calculated to engross attention. Perhaps they have blinded us to other features which, really there, are only waiting to be discerned and appreciated.

Again we look at the portrait, and with closer scrutiny. It is impressed upon us that He who is pictured is great with no ordinary greatness. The Jesus of the Marcan Gospel has it in Him to exercise a marvellous influence. He is invested with strange powers. Wonderful is His energy. Wherever He goes there is stir and movement; the burst of enthusiasm; opposition equally significant of an acknowledged forcefulness. His "come ye after me" is no sooner heard than obeyed. Unclean spirits are subdued by His word, and His fame as physician spreads far and wide. It is noised that He is in the house; straight-way it is besieged by the surging crowd; He will seek privacy, but multitudes throng to Him. His hearers marvel as they listen to His teaching; His authoritative tone is remarked; it is felt that there is something entirely new in the doctrine set forth by Him. Incisive are His utterances, and ever to the point. He has a word for all; and it is a word which, exactly suited to the case, goes home to the very heart. He will raise men to higher planes. Lofty are the thoughts to which He gives expression. Himself full of God-con-

sciousness He will make God a reality for those among whom He lives and moves¹. That He has a mission to them He is persuaded, and He spends Himself in its discharge.

More features, then, are discernible in the portrait of Jesus. His humanity remains, and it is of a very noble type. Exalted is His mission and heroically is it fulfilled; "His Passion and His Death are in truth His coronation²." The true man who still looks down on us from St Mark's canvas is no ordinary man. He is the exceptionally great personage. "He towers above His fellow-men in virtue of a calling which is peculiarly His own: Messiah, Son of God, King of the Kingdom which is God's, knowing the very heart of God as man has never yet known it³."

It is even so. We, viewing the portrait for ourselves, are constrained to allow that descriptions of such sort are not overdrawn. They coincide with our own opinions of it.

But we must look again, still more narrowly, at the portrait. What if other features have escaped notice? What if there be that in the Marcan narrative which compels us to go a step further before the final opinion is arrived at?

¹ "He must call into life in the souls of others the treasure of His own soul." von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 3. See also Arno Neumann, *Jesus*, p. 76.

² Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 100.

³ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 30.

There is much in the narrative which startles us. Were it not that uncertainty attaches to the reading, appeal might be made at once to that "Son of God" which meets us in the opening verse¹; Jesus is, in any case, the "mightier one" whose coming is expected; who, appearing, is quick to assert His sovereignty. He has authority to forgive sins. The Sabbath must own Him Lord. Earthly relationships are scarce heeded by Him. He takes it as a matter of course that there should be grave questioning as to who He really is. No matter that it means the felon's cross, allegiance to His person is insisted on. He identifies Himself with the Gospel He proclaims. Foretelling false Christs He emphasises His own importance; they will come "in My name." His "I say unto you" has the ring of conscious supremacy. For Himself His own sayings are of transcendent and eternal weight and import: "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." He knows that death will have no dominion over Him. Unhesitatingly does He accept the designation "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." Time after time He styles Himself by that mysterious title, "Son of Man." A deep meaning must be read into it².

¹ The words "Son of God" are omitted in some very ancient MSS.; they may, however, have stood in the original text.

² "He speaks as 'the Son of Man' who in His representative character descends to bear the burden of the race." J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 65. Cf. Dalman, *Words of Jesus*, pp. 234 ff. See also Grill, *Untersuchungen über die Entstehung des 4. Evan.*, pp. 46 ff.

What shall we say now? Account shall be taken of the fact that there is difference of opinion as to the exact significance of the title "Son of Man"; of suggestions that its reiteration is mainly due to the dogmatics of the early Church, and that its use by Jesus Himself was comparatively rare¹. Perhaps we are told to make allowances, to think of pictures of Jesus re-painted and gilded by the Church's faith²; if so the reply is that we cannot do otherwise than take the Marcan portrait as it stands in view. And then we are driven to confess that it is the portrait of one utterly unlike all other men. He who is subject of it is great with more than human greatness. As the Roman centurion is reported to have said of Him, "truly this man was divine³."

We are compelled to go beyond the descriptions given of the portrait. The subject of it is indeed true man; He is the exceptionally great personage; His majesty is unique⁴. "King of men" He is, but He is more than mere man. The conclusion is that we are "justified in holding that the relation in which He stood to God was not only different in degree from that in which we stand, but also unique in kind⁵."

¹ Bousset, *Jesus*, pp. 89 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³ J. Armitage Robinson, *Study of the Gospels*, p. 59. It may be said here that Barth (*Das Johannesevangelium*, pp. 15 ff.) works up to the same point with copious reference to *all three* Synoptics; remarking on the precarious position of opponents who disallow so much as unhistorical. Cf. Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, pp. 22, 23.

⁴ Cf. Beyschlag, *N. T. Theology*, 1. p. 75.

⁵ Lotze, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 172.

“The Synoptic picture of Christ,” it has been said, is “the finest flower of religious poetry¹.” We realise the beauty of the Marcan picture, but we may not linger on it. The second portrait has now to be studied; that presented in the Fourth Gospel.

The portrait is a noble one. At a glance we perceive that its subject is an exalted personage. Of such sort is the word-painting that His greatness overpowers us; even as it did those who appear constrained to follow Him, to attach themselves to His person. There is an air of imperiousness about Him; He is one who has a right to command and to expect obedience. Men own Him Master; truly has it been said: “He did not invite them as friends, nor even as pupils, but summoned them as subjects².” It is natural that He should be confidently appealed to when there is need of help. Traders in the Temple courts scatter before His imposing presence, at His sternly authoritative order. Wonderful His powers of perception, profound His insight into character. On the one hand He inspires such awe that even disciples refrain from questioning Him; on the other hand His continued stay is earnestly desired by strangers. There are bursts of enthusiasm; equally significant is the opposition, the hostility, encountered by Him. The multitudes are clamorous to hail Him king; just because He is a force to be

¹ Brandt, quoted by Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 371.

² *Ecce Homo* (20th ed.), p. 67.

reckoned with His destruction is resolved and planned. His very foes marvel at His teaching; and in truth His discourse is of great matters, His demands are pitched high. If He speaks of Himself it is with conscious dignity. In His condescension He is sublime. Majestically does He figure in the closing scenes. He "decides His own fate¹." Those who will arrest Him quail before Him. Stately is His mien, serenely does He speak, in the high priest's palace. The Roman governor shrinks into insignificance by His side. No title on the cross is needed to proclaim His royalty. But the Johannine representation does not stop short there. It is plain from it that, if Jesus be the exceptionally great personage, mere man He most certainly is not. He in whom men recognise the "son of Joseph" is pointed to as Son of God, Anointed, King of Israel, Son of Man. His glory is manifested. He knows all men, as knowing what is in man. If He tell of heavenly things it is as having seen and known them, for He has come down from heaven; He will soon return to heaven. He speaks of His Father and Himself in the same breath; if His Father works hitherto He works also; if eternal life be the knowledge of the only true God it is equally the knowledge of Himself; dishonour done to Him is dishonour done to God. He can say confidently,

¹ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 399. See also Lütgert, *Die joh. Christologie*, p. 90: "Die Kraft, durch eigenen Willen und eigene That in den Tod zu gehen, bildet Jesu Herrlichkeit."

“the Father is in Me and I in Him.” He has existed in the ages past and gone. World-wide will be His dominion. He is pictured as “the ‘Word’ that was with God from all eternity, the creator of the world, who allowed His glory to be seen for a short time in the flesh, and who then returned to the Father, not to new honours, but to the place He had occupied of old, where He was now preparing the abode of His faithful flock¹.” And He is so pictured by one who claims to have known Him in His earthly life: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth².” “Such is the melody, the *Leitmotiv* which rings in our ears again and again amid a mass of variations³.”

The descriptions we have had of the second portrait are, then, justified. They coincide with the opinions we ourselves have formed, and perhaps at the first glance. The Jesus of the Johannine representation is indeed far more than the exceptionally great personage. Mere man He is not. He is invested with a halo of divinity.

Quite so. And yet we may not stop here. The very radiancy of the picture has perhaps blinded us to other features discernible in Him who is the subject. It must be looked at again, and more closely.

¹ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 399.

² John i. 14.

³ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 387.

Truly there are other features which have been overlooked. The representation, after all, is of One who, if more than mere man, is true man. Again and again there are touches only to be interpreted of humanity shared by Him. As "a man" He is spoken of and pictured. Like other men He has his "abode." He is minded to go here and go there. He companies with "His mother and His brethren"; His hearers are permitted to speak of His "father and mother¹." Because "wearied with His journey" He will rest awhile

¹ This (with passages already instanced) raises the "perennial question" of the Virgin-birth. From the silence of Mark, of the Pauline Epistles, it would seem that the doctrine formed no part of the earliest stratum of Apostolic teaching. Ultimately traceable to the opening chapters of Matt. and Luke, it would be known to the Fourth Evangelist, for he was evidently acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels. His own silence is explained in two ways: he deems it unnecessary to repeat what is already well known and accepted; he will deliberately brush the nativity stories aside. According to O. Holtzmann (*Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 47) he will agree with the opponents of Jesus that Joseph is really the earthly father of Jesus; according to Zahn (*Einleit.*, II. pp. 504 f.) he will so portray the origin of the children of God (John i. 13) after the pattern picture of the origin of the only Son of God who is such in the fullest sense that his readers will be at once reminded of a begetting and a birth without carnal impulse, will of man. In any case Joseph would be the *legal* father of Jesus (cf. Dalman, *Words of Jesus*, pp. 318 f.). It is allowed by Baldensperger (*Der Prolog &c.*, pp. 28, 123) that the Johannine theology is by no means incompatible with representations having their basis in the Virgin-birth. But see Grill, *Untersuchungen über die Entstehung des 4. Evan.*, pp. 330 ff. If I refrain from discussion of the "difficult and anxious question" in these pages I may be allowed to refer to my "Born of the Virgin Mary, or Traditional Belief and Present Unsettlement."

and quench His thirst. He can form friendships and strong attachments. He knows the feeling of gladness; the groan of mingled wrath and anguish comes from Him; in the presence of bereavement and death "Jesus wept." By implication He realises the necessity of prayer: is He not confident that He is always heard¹? There are moments when He is "troubled in the spirit," perhaps one dark hour when He pleads for deliverance from His impending fate². He will stand on His defence and protest His innocence. His almost dying words ("I thirst") are "the keen expression of bodily exhaustion³." The "sour wine" offered by those whose mockery had been exchanged for pity is "received" because His tortured frame needs it.

The descriptions, then, given of the Johannine portrait of Jesus fail to satisfy us. In so far as they accentuate the divinity which shines out from it they are, beyond question, amply justified. They are not full descriptions. The manhood which we cannot but recognise is omitted from them⁴.

We have made some independent study of the two portraits, taking them separately. The time has come

¹ "Es ist eine Entstellung des Gedankens wenn man von einem 'Schein-gebet' redet." Lütgert, *Die joh. Christologie*, p. 34.

² John xii. 27. But cf. Westcott, *St John*, p. 182. See also Oberhey, *Der Gottesbrunnen der Menschheit*, p. 116.

³ Westcott, *St John*, p. 277.

⁴ It is recognised by Oberhey: "Im Johanneseyangelium wird auf die volle Menschheit Jesu überall Gewicht gelegt." *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

for us to compare them; to remark their distinctive characteristics. Sharp contrast there probably is: if so, how shall we now be disposed to state it?

Beyond doubt there are differences. In respect to style and colouring, to the lights and shades, to pose of subject, to the filling in of details, the two portraits are significantly unlike. There is no need to be told that two schools of painters are represented by them, for it is at once obvious. The artists are different. As for the one, he will devote himself to graphic presentments of the scenes of everyday life; as for the other, he is one who looks beneath the surface of things. The one will portray, the other will interpret. The one is an adept at drawing rapid likenesses; the other, with deeper subtilty and insight, is bent on painting soul-portraits¹.

But are there no resemblances, no common features, in the portraits which come from two artists whose individuality has stamped itself on their respective works? We cannot but feel persuaded that there are. One resemblance is so marked that it must be allowed without a moment's hesitation; the portrait, in each case, is of an exalted personage. To drop metaphor: there is no getting away from the fact that He who is pictured in the Synoptics and in the Fourth Gospel towers above other men. In each case we gaze on One who is verily and indeed clothed with majesty.

Is there no further resemblance? Again we answer

¹ Cf. Angus Mackay, *A Reasonable Faith*, pp. 102, 103.

that there is ; it must, however, be admitted that it is no longer so distinct. And the reason is this : the two narratives are penned from a different standpoint ; that which the one dwells on and accentuates is more lightly touched on by the other. But to come to the point at once : the great personage represented is in both cases discovered to be more than mere man. Looking to the one narrative we discern manhood in which there is the divine ; looking to the other we remark divinity which includes manhood. There are, after all, common features ; the human and the superhuman.

We pursue our inquiry no further. Enough to have realised that the Synoptic (let us say, the Marcan) and Johannine portraits of Jesus are by no means so totally unlike as they have been held to be. That there is a contrast between them we own ; we will go so far as to say that it is a marked contrast ; it is not, however, one which leaves no loophole of escape from the "either... or!" which is proposed to us. There are resemblances, common features, which, if not at once apparent, become apparent with closer scrutiny ; and they justify the assertion that the subject of the portraits is, indeed, the same. Beyond doubt it is treated differently : naturally so ; for the artists belong to different schools, they are men of diverse type. Their point of view is not identical. The strange thing would be if they pictured Jesus in precisely the same way.

Was it Renan who said, "We should only write

about what we love"? The words have point in the present instance. The Synoptists have loved to dwell on Him who, "approved of God," "went about doing good"; as for the Fourth Evangelist, he will tell of hallowed memories and ripened thoughts as one who has penetrated into the inmost soul of Jesus. "Who would not confess that in his sweet unearthly picture he has given us the true religious import of that sacred Life¹?"

In conclusion. That "simple formula; here man—there God" must be demurred to. Whether we look at the Synoptic Jesus or the Johannine Christ we are constrained to say:

Thou seemest human and divine.

VII. RECAPITULATION.

We have instituted some comparison of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics: what is the sum and substance of the conclusions which appear to follow from it?

There were two preliminary considerations. In the first place, it was impressed upon us that strong preferences for the Synoptic representation are not of necessity incompatible with unfeigned acceptance of what is held to be a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. And,

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 417, but cf. p. 416: "the historical form of Jesus is now transfigured into the glorious object of his spiritual vision."

again, it was decided that we were in no wise tied and bound by mechanical and cast-iron theories of inspiration. "However the Spirit of God may have used for His higher purposes the minds of men, He did not overpower their natural habits of expression, or hold individual genius passive in the grasp of His Almighty hand¹."

Accordingly we began our inquiry as fully prepared to find and to admit a contrast of some sort between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. One explanation was already to hand: they were "written by living men, whose life entered into their writings," hence they would assuredly reflect the "colour and temper" of the mind of their respective authors². Individuality, then, would account for a great deal. As a matter of course each Evangelist would tell his story in his own way. That the ground traversed would not be, in every case, precisely the same need be no occasion of difficulty. Deficiencies might reasonably be supplied; fuller details given where fuller information was possessed. Only then it was speedily realised that the contrast which met us was not so easily accounted for. If much might be explained by diversity of type and temperament, there was also much which refused to admit of such an explanation. The question confronted us: what of discrepancies and

¹ Newman Smyth, *Old Faiths in New Light*, p. 26.

² Munger, *Freedom of Faith*, p. 16.

contradictions, differences of conception and presentment, which come to light when Synoptics and Fourth Gospel are closely looked into and compared¹?

We proceed at once with a *résumé* of the general conclusions arrived at in the course of an investigation which, if lengthy, falls a long way short of completeness.

To begin with. The chronology of the Synoptic Gospels is evidently confused, not to be relied on throughout. They tacitly admit that it needs amending; they implicitly make demands for readjustment. Certainly they presuppose that earlier, if more private, ministry of Jesus which they do not relate; assuredly they invite conjectures as to a public ministry which extended over several years. They are, it would seem, right in assigning the Cleansing of the Temple to the last visit to Jerusalem. The possibility is that they stand corrected by the Fourth Evangelist in their dating of the Last Supper, of the "Death-day" of Jesus. It may be that there are other "examples where St John" (to quote from a critic of the eighteenth century) "appears in a delicate manner to have corrected the faults of his predecessors²." We cannot, however, build too much on the chronology of the Fourth Gospel³.

¹ Apparently they do not greatly trouble Nuelsen: "Alle Unterschiede des 4. Evan. von den drei ersten lassen sich völlig befriedigend aus den verschiedenen Verhältnissen erklären." (*Die Bedeutung des Evan. Joh. für die Christliche Lehre*, p. 15.)

² Michaelis, *Introd. to N. T.*, i. p. 95. ³ Cf. Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 6.

Secondly. With the Synoptics the scene is chiefly laid in Galilee; the Fourth Evangelist points more particularly to Judaea, to Jerusalem. On one supposition the difference is easily accounted for: if he be himself a Jerusalemite it would be only natural that he should seize on events which had happened in his own neighbourhood. But apart from this, the author, whoever he be, will by no means exclude activities in Galilee, he not only allows for but alludes to a Galilaean ministry¹. As for the Synoptics, they crowd, may-be, events in reality spread over several years into one short week. They drop many a hint that Jesus was no stranger in the Holy City. The pathetic lament over Jerusalem is, we cannot but feel persuaded, significant of earlier visits. Another, perhaps a stronger, appeal can be made to Synoptic references to acquaintances, close friends, in and near Jerusalem. That it has really been the scene of a prolonged if intermittent ministry appears probable.

In the third place. The Baptist of the two representations is the same man. There is agreement that he is, in any case, the great personage. If question there be—and it would seem that there is—of his depression by the Fourth Evangelist a reason is apparent: erroneous opinions as to his personality are prevalent and require to be controverted.

A fourth conclusion. The “enhancement of miracle”

¹ Is it entirely correct to say, “Galilee is quite without interest for him”? von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 421.

is, after all, not so strikingly in evidence. If the Fourth Evangelist gives no detailed accounts of cures wrought on victims of demoniacal possession, he does not disallow Synoptic narratives of such works of healing; he will have them inferred, he more than hints at them. For himself he will fix on just those "signs" which he deems more particularly suited to his purpose. Two only remain occasions of very real difficulty, and one of the two is common to the Synoptic Gospels. As for the others, they refuse to be set aside offhand. It may be that explanations will point to descriptions, natural at the time, but requiring to be modified in the light of modern scientific knowledge. In any case we dwell on the mighty influence of mind on mind and matter which our age has come to recognise; on powers possessed and exercised by "the greatest spiritual force that the world has ever known."

Fifthly. That, in respect to reported discourses, conversations, sayings, there is a contrast both sharp and significant between the two representations must be unhesitatingly asserted. It is in part, but only in part, to be accounted for by questions of locality and populace; that such a one as Jesus both could and would adapt the form and subject-matter of his discourses to audiences so totally different as those in Galilee and Jerusalem might, indeed, be reasonably expected. But we are bound to add at once that, in view of marked peculiarities presented by the Fourth Gospel, explanations of such sort are altogether in-

adequate. The subjectivity discoverable, it is true, in the Synoptics is now enhanced. Whoever he be, the author of the Fourth Gospel is the idealist. He is not careful to give *ipsissima verba* of those who figure in his narrative. It bears throughout the impress of his own thoughts and conceptions. They are expressed in his own language; not, perhaps, without resort to a terminology acquired by him on foreign soil.

We arrive at the sixth general conclusion, and the last. There is scarcely occasion for surprise that the contrast between Synoptic and Johannine representations of Jesus should be emphasised; a contrast there undoubtedly is, and it is a sharp contrast. That a personage of transcendent greatness is in each case represented is plain at the outset; it is not at the first glance manifest that it is the self-same personage. Here the lineaments are, apparently, of one who, if "the greatest man that ever lived," is still mere man only; there everything seems to proclaim the more than mere man, the entirely superhuman. With prolonged and closer investigation, however, common features are at length discerned. They compel to a recognition that, if in the one case Manhood be accentuated and in the other Divinity, there is but the one subject which has been portrayed by two artists of very different type and standpoint. Divinity does, after all, shine forth from the Synoptic Jesus; the Johannine Christ is true man¹.

¹ "Mit derselben Energie wie den himmlischen Ursprung Jesu

“Human and divine,” then, is the Jesus of both representations. By the Fourth Evangelist. He is pictured from a point of view which is deeply suggestive of long years of pondering on His character and life. It is an “aged Christian disciple” who will tell of Him¹; and perhaps in a way which “reflects the habits of thought of the Greek society for whose benefit” he pens his Gospel.

That “aged Christian disciple,” so we are still disposed to believe, may turn out to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Notwithstanding all that has been noticed he may be the son of Zebedee². But is he? There must be further inquiry before the tentative answer can be ventured. Accordingly our next business will be to search for direct information respecting the Apostle John; to compare it with what is said of the beloved disciple, with whatever “fragmentary tradition” may be forthcoming as to a John who lived on to extreme old age at Ephesus.

betont er (the Evangelist) seine menschliche Art.” Lütgert, *Die joh. Christologie*, p. 70.

¹ As convinced of “the supreme importance of the person of Christ Jesus.” von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 415.

² Baur pertinently remarks: “Warum soll denn die Voraussetzung eine absolut unmögliche seyn, dass auch ein Apostel, als Verfasser einer evangelischen Geschichte, sich auf einen nicht streng geschichtlichen Standpunct gestellt, und nach dem Zwecke seiner Darstellung das Faktische der Geschichte mehr oder weniger umgestalte habe?” *Die Kanon. Evang.*, p. 81.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN THE APOSTLE AND JOHN OF EPHESUS.

WHAT estimate may be formed of the Apostle John from direct information respecting him ?

The question is advisedly limited in its scope. It has been said, not without reason, that a frequent cause of misconception is the habit inveterate with many of reading the Gospels or hearing them read as a single work; preaching or teaching which, unmindful of distinctive features requiring a division into two groups, is based on a combination of the several narratives¹. By implication those biographical sketches of the Apostle John are deprecated which show that all four Gospels have been fused together into a single whole. The outline is drawn, perhaps, from the Synoptics; then the lights and shades are filled in from the Fourth Gospel. Its author is identified with the beloved disciple and the beloved disciple with the son of Zebedee. The circumstances, the character,

¹ Cf. Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 15. "In einer unnatürlichen Einheit"; Baur, *Kanon. Evang.*, p. 63.

of the Fourth Evangelist are, in short, delineated with incessant reference to the writings which bear St John's name¹.

We do not now raise complaint that this should be the case. The reasonableness of it may be conceded where the biographer has fully satisfied himself that the Fourth Evangelist and the Apostle John are the self-same person. Obviously, it would be unreasonable at the present juncture; when the object in view is this, to decide how the St John of explicit notices and allusions compares with the conjectured author of the Fourth Gospel. Hence, for the present, the Gospel called after him shall be ruled out as a source of information. We confine ourselves to whatever statements may be forthcoming from other quarters.

To begin with the Synoptic Gospels. Of the two brothers who respond to the definite call of Jesus² James is presumably the elder and John the younger. Their father is Zebedee; of him nothing more is known than that he was a Galilaean fisherman who had hired servants in his employ³. As for their mother, it is perhaps safe to identify her with the Salome of subsequent allusion⁴; if so she is sister to the mother of Jesus and cousin of Elisabeth, one of the women who minister to Jesus of their substance and bring

¹ As, e.g., by Macdonald, *Life and Writings of St John*.

² Mark i. 19.

³ Mark i. 20.

⁴ Cf. Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xvi. 1.

sweet spices to the empty tomb. The two brothers are in partnership with Peter¹. They are present at the healing of Peter's mother-in-law². Ordained of the number of the Twelve they are surnamed Boanerges³; a designation of obscure significance which has been interpreted of fiery zeal and which is never again applied to them. They come to Jesus with an ambitious request⁴;—according to another version of the story the mother makes it on her sons' behalf⁵. They unite in desiring that Jesus will call down fire from heaven on inhospitable Samaritans⁶. It is John who reports to Jesus that he and the other disciples had forbidden one who, not being a follower with them, was casting out devils⁷. Together with his brother James and Peter he is included in a sort of inner circle within the Apostolic college: the three are present at the raising of Jairus' daughter⁸; they alone are witnesses of the Transfiguration⁹; they (and this time Andrew is associated with them) make private request to Jesus to be told when events predicted will come to pass¹⁰. Once and once only is John connected with Peter alone—when sent by Jesus to prepare the Passover¹¹. With James and Peter he is present in the

¹ Luke v. 7, 10.

³ Mark iii. 17.

⁵ Matt. xx. 20.

⁷ Mark ix. 38; Luke ix. 49.

⁹ Mark ix. 2, refs.

¹¹ Luke xxii. 8.

² Mark i. 29–31, refs.

⁴ Mark x. 35 ff.

⁶ Luke ix. 54.

⁸ Mark v. 37, refs.

¹⁰ Mark xiii. 3.

garden of Gethsemane¹. He is not again mentioned by name in the Synoptic narrative.

We pass from the Synoptics to the Acts of the Apostles. John's name stands third ("Peter and James and John") on the list of the Eleven who are assembled with others in the upper room². With Peter, who takes the lead, he is at the Gate Beautiful when the lame man is made to walk³. With Peter he is imprisoned and brought before the Sanhedrin: Peter is spokesman, but there is equal "boldness" on the part of John, he is equally accounted "unlearned and ignorant⁴." With Peter he is sent from Jerusalem to Samaria on a mission of inspection⁵. When next he is alluded to by name, and for the last time, it is simply in connection with his brother's martyrdom; Herod "killed James the brother of John with the sword⁶."

From the Acts of the Apostles we turn to the Epistle to the Galatians. According to St Paul, James (the "Lord's brother"), Cephas (Peter) and John (surely the Apostle John) have become "the three leading Apostles"; in repute as "Pillars" of the Church at Jerusalem⁷. There is little to determine whether

¹ Mark xiv. 33; Matt. xxvi. 36.

² Acts i. 13.

³ Acts iii. 1 ff.

⁴ Acts iv. 1, 3, 8, 13.

⁵ Acts viii. 14. "Eine Art Kontrolle"; von Dobschütz, *Das apos. Zeitalter*, p. 39.

⁶ Acts xii. 2.

⁷ Gal. ii. 9. (It will be remembered that Schwartz prefers to think of "John whose surname was Mark.")

John be of the stricter school of James or of the less conservative school of Peter; what seems plain and clear is this, he believes that his own mission-field is circumscribed. He can frankly own that to Paul and Barnabas there has come a divine call to labour among the heathen. He can willingly extend to them the right hand of fellowship. For himself he will stay on where he is, and devote his energies to those of the circumcision only¹.

Then the curtain falls on John the Apostle and son of Zebedee. Except on the assumption that the Apocalypse was penned by him, his name never again occurs in the pages of the New Testament. Of direct New Testament information respecting him there is, then, absolutely nothing more than what has now been gleaned from the Synoptics², the Acts of the Apostles, the solitary allusion by St Paul.

What, then, may be inferred from the very fragmentary notices which are all we have to go upon (for the moment) in attempting to form some estimate of the personality of St John?

To begin with. We recognise in him a Galilæan fisherman. The probability is that he is younger than his brother James. He comes of a family which, if

¹ Gal. ii. 9. It is, perhaps, significant that he can recognise the wider mission.

² "We fail to realise how seldom St John the son of Zebedee appears in the Synoptists." von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 433.

prosperous and tolerably well-to-do, is in no way removed above that lower middle class to which his partner so evidently belongs. If his mother be really Salome he is first cousin to Jesus, and other relatives of his are of priestly lineage¹. Be he a householder himself or resident with his parents his home is away on the coast of the sea of Galilee.

Again, there was a considerable Greek element in the population of Galilee; hence, if not exactly bi-lingual, John, son of Zebedee, would have more than a smattering of the Greek language, a knowledge sufficient for the practical purposes of daily life². If later on he is spoken of as "unlearned and ignorant" it surely does not follow that intellectual cultivation was absolutely wanting in him³; the expression would simply mean that, unlike St Paul, he was no trained theologian, unversed in rabbinic lore. He will have at least received the ordinary education provided in the synagogue-school of his native town⁴.

He becomes a follower of Jesus. Together with his brother he is enrolled among the number of the Twelve Apostles. That he is keen for his Master's cause is certain; but along with fervent zeal there are also faults, defects of character, apparent in him. It

¹ Luke i. 5, 36.

² Schlatter, *Die Sprache und Heimat des 4. Evan.*, p. 9.

³ Delff, *Rabbi Jesus*, p. 76.

⁴ For some notice of the opportunities within the reach of a Galilæan boy, vide J. B. Mayor, *Epis. of St James*, pp. xli., xlii.

is not so evident that he is naturally of a loving disposition. He is intolerant, impetuous to vindictiveness, his ambitions are selfish and betray unspiritual conceptions. It may be argued perhaps that he has "the defects of his qualities"; qualities discerned by Jesus, who marks his sterling worth, his capacity for usefulness¹. The fact that he is admitted to the "inner circle" is significant of the high regard of Jesus which he shares with Peter and his brother James. If importance be attachable to the order in which the names are mentioned it may be again significant that, as a rule², his name stands last of the chosen three who are so frequently alone with Jesus.

As a member of the "inner circle" he is associated with Peter. It is particularly noticeable that on several occasions he is paired with Peter. The latter is spokesman and man of action; as for John son of Zebedee he is the trusty and staunch companion who is content to look on, who prefers to remain silent.

A time comes when he figures as a leader of the Church at Jerusalem. Once more it may be noted that his name is placed last in order of the reputed "Pillars"; then the question must be asked, what is his attitude to Gentile Christianity? It would appear to be sympathetic, and at the same time guarded.

¹ Cf. Reuss, *Geschichte der h. S. des N. T.*, p. 215, "Jesus musste tiefer geblickt haben &c."

² There are remarkable exceptions: cf. Luke ix. 28; vide also Acts xii. 2.

He is evidently glad that the Gospel-message should be carried to the heathen. His views have so far broadened that he can bid Paul God-speed in what is unmistakably his divinely-allotted work. They have scarcely broadened enough for him to slough off all his old prejudices. He certainly does not throw in his lot unreservedly with one for whom the wall of partition has been broken down. When heard of on the occasion in question he is still representative of Judaistic Christendom¹.

We ask here : how old would John son of Zebedee be when he figures here in the pages of the New Testament ? An exact answer is impossible ; there is nothing to fix his age at the day when he "forsook all" to follow Jesus. If the date of St Paul's visit to Jerusalem be *circa* A.D. 50 then some two decades will have elapsed since the Crucifixion. The call to follow Jesus had come, say, three years earlier ; there is nothing in the story of it to suggest extreme youthfulness in the brother-pair ; the assumption would rather be that both James and John are grown men. If the scantiness of allusion to the father is indicative that Zebedee soon passed away, the latter may perhaps be pictured as advanced in years ; then his two sons might have reached middle age when they became disciples of

¹ Wrede (*Paulus*, p. 43) remarks as follows : " In gewissen Grenzen. Denn über ein Schiedlich-friedlich kam es doch nicht hinaus. Die Einigung bedeutete zugleich Trennung : Paulus zu den Heiden, Petrus zu den Juden."

Jesus. Perhaps St John was between 20 and 30 years of age then; the chances are that he is getting on to 50 when last heard of. He will have arrived, that is, at a period of life when opinions have become fixed and settled. In the vast majority of cases there has been the settling down in this or that particular sphere of action; character has been formed; and while there will still be development it will be, in the main, on the same lines. There is a reluctance to move very far away from accustomed standpoints. It has ceased to be an easy thing to enter on the new profession or occupation, to break with the past, to take up with unfamiliar theories, to engage in fresh studies. New ideas and aspirations may be approved, perhaps welcomed; the inclination is ever strong to leave the working-out to the younger generation.

And yet there are exceptions to the rule. Instances are not wanting of men as old as and older than the son of Zebedee at the time in question who have struck out boldly on some new path. It has at last become possible for them to follow what has all along been their real bent. In respect to politics they have crossed over to the other side. They have parted company with beliefs and convictions which have dominated them through long years; perhaps they have exchanged one religious persuasion for another, or identified themselves with another school of thought. Through force of circumstances they have been compelled to make

that break with the past which means the unfolding of qualities of a higher order really possessed but hitherto unexercised, perhaps never suspected either by themselves or others. Events, may-be, have taken place which have startled them to reflection; reflection has been followed by persistent attempts to master altered conditions and circumstances; thought and study emanate in telling action widely different from that of earlier days. To make use of a common but inelegant expression, "the new departure" is by no manner of means impossible for the man who is already leaving middle age behind him.

What if John son of Zebedee be such an exception? He no doubt disappears from view in the New Testament pages as one who has thrown in his lot with those of the circumcision¹; as yet we are unable to detect signs which point to a speculative nature, to a character marked by depth of spirituality and warmth of affection: it might indeed be said that his failings are more conspicuous than his virtues; he is narrow-minded and inclined to be self-seeking, perhaps self-assertive. At the same time there is significance in his being not only of the number of the Twelve², but

¹ "Dass der Johannes der Gal. 2 auftritt das Ev. nicht geschrieben, kann unbedenklich zugegeben werden. Aber muss er derselbe geblieben sein...?" Reuss, *Gesch. der h. S. des N. T.*, p. 215.

² It is altogether impossible to accept Delff's theory that the relation in which the Twelve stood to Jesus was in no way private and personal but purely official (*Rabbi Jesus*, p. 77).

also one of the three who, standing very near to Jesus, enjoyed His special regard and confidence. That he is no insignificant person is patent, for he is one of the leaders of the infant Church at Jerusalem. He is, it is true, the man of middle age, perhaps of more than middle age; but what may not the future have in store for him? His character may be chastened and refined with every added year. He may yet be brought more and more under the influence (direct or indirect) of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. To lessons learnt from St Paul may be added reflections and convictions borne in upon him by the approach of the catastrophe; as he sees Jerusalem encompassed by the Roman legions. A new career may open out before him on the day of his final departure from the fated city. He may then have completely broken with his past: with the changed scenes there may be the changed man.

But this is to move on too quickly. Attention is now claimed by the following question:—is the John son of Zebedee of direct information anywhere discoverable in the Gospel which bears his name? And it had better be considered under two heads: in the first place, specific reference to the sons of Zebedee must be weighed; secondly, contrasts and resemblances with the disciple whom Jesus loved must be taken into account.

What, then, does the Fourth Evangelist relate—and how does he relate it—of the two sons of Zebedee? But once only are they alluded to, and without mention of their names; they form two of the little company to

whom Jesus manifests Himself at the sea of Tiberias¹. The fact of their presence is recorded, but not one word is said to indicate that their relations with Jesus have been exceptionally close. The Fourth Evangelist, indeed, refrains throughout from allusions to any specially favoured three. As has been remarked elsewhere, but for the notices in ch. vi. he is equally reticent with regard to the appointment of the Twelve.

We pass without delay to the second head. At the very beginning of his narrative the Fourth Evangelist is thought to make the presence felt of one who, unnamed, is said to be none other than John son of Zebedee himself². It is further conjectured that he is also the one who later on figures so prominently as the beloved disciple³; the question then is: is the conjecture supported or not by what has been set down as to the son of Zebedee of direct information? The question must be gone into point by point.

A first point. The son of Zebedee is, by calling, a fisherman. As such he figures on the one occasion when, as son of Zebedee, he is alluded to in the Fourth Gospel. Is it quite so certain that the beloved disciple is of the same calling? That he companies with those who embark with Peter for the night's fishing is obvious, but the fact may argue nothing more than

¹ John xxi. 1, 2.

² John i. 35.

³ "Dass der Verfasser den Zebedaiden Johannes meine, ist die traditionelle Ansicht, sie lässt sich aber aus dem Evan. schwerlich erweisen." Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz &c.*, p. 35.

intimate acquaintance with the party. He may be one of the two unnamed disciples (in the wider sense)¹; it is just possible that he is an eighth person who tells of the doings of the seven whom he enumerates:—if so his ordinary occupation need not necessarily be the same as theirs. They are not one and all fishermen. For aught we know the beloved disciple may be the man of means and leisure; not the artisan.

A second point. Looking to circumstances and connections the impression gained in the one case is that of a family not perhaps absolutely dependent on a thriving business, and certainly removed from poverty; in the other there are hints which suggest competency if not exactly affluence. The Zebedee household appears to have relatives in good position; that said it may be fairly urged that the social status is in no way different from that of Peter. To make a similar assumption in the case of the beloved disciple is, to say the least, not easy. True that the following of a trade was not only no social barrier but positively enjoined by Jewish custom; the difficulty remains of seeing a Galilaean peasant and artisan in him who moves about so freely in exalted circles. He is so thoroughly at home in them that we are led to conceive of him as born to comparatively high station, the Jewish aristocrat.

¹ It has been suggested (by Godet) that they were John the Presbyter and Aristion of later allusion, viz. by Papias. Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 226.

There is a remarkable coincidence: the uncle and the aunt of John son of Zebedee are of priestly and high-priestly descent; of the beloved disciple it is recorded that he is known to the high-priest. Intimacy may be inferred; not necessarily relationship¹.

A third point. John son of Zebedee is ever and again coupled with Peter; with the Fourth Evangelist Peter and the beloved disciple are made to figure side by side, are named in the same connection. The coincidence is striking; whether it be entirely conclusive for purposes of identification is another matter. That some weight must be attached to it is certain; it has been urged that unless the beloved disciple and St John are identified two pairs have to be reckoned with who are "too much the doubles of each other²." And yet it is not altogether inconceivable that, if Peter and John should be together and act together as Apostles, there should be occasions when Peter is accompanied by another who regards him with an affection warmly reciprocated by himself. It may be added here that, while the beloved disciple appears to be the comparatively young man³, there is nothing to

¹ Delff infers relationship. For him the beloved disciple is a member of the priestly aristocracy. He will even discover him in the John of Acts iv. 6—where the context is, however, anything but suggestive of even concealed friendship (*Rabbi Jesus*, pp. 92-95). H. J. Holtzmann allows a possibility of relationship (*Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 23). But cf. Westcott, *St John*, p. 255.

² Sanday, *Criticism of Fourth Gospel*, p. 107.

³ Delff imagines him to be the young man of Mark xiv. 51, 52.

fix the exact age of the brother-Apostle of Peter. He may have been of Peter's own age.

A fourth point. According to the Fourth Evangelist the beloved disciple takes his stand by the cross of Jesus, and receives His last command. Not one word is said to indicate the presence of John son of Zebedee; we are well-nigh constrained to infer his absence from the closing scenes: "then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." He might, of course, have overcome his fears and returned¹.

A fifth point. There may be no express statement; at the same time there are grounds for the supposition that the beloved disciple is a resident of Jerusalem, perhaps a householder. Of hints that precisely the same thing may be said of John son of Zebedee there are none whatever. If he has gone up regularly to the Jewish feasts he is perhaps a comparative stranger in Jerusalem. The home, his own home or his father's, which he has left to follow Jesus is away to the North, by the sea of Galilee.

A sixth point—and a last. What of resemblances, contrasts, in regard to type of character? The beloved disciple is evidently slow to speak; once only does he break silence of his own accord, by preference he is the attentive listener and the looker-on; if the same characteristic be observable in John son of Zebedee it

¹ Even then we might have to think of him as standing "afar off." Luke xxiii. 49.

is at the later period; in the days when he follows Jesus he is less reluctant to express his thoughts. In the one case there are traits indicative of devotion, of an earnestness which is attended by self-restraint, of intuitive perception: in the other devotion may be admitted—but it apparently fails to stand the test in Gethsemane, at Calvary; then the other traits are suggestive of impetuosity, of ambition, intolerance. Those traits have disappeared indeed in the John of the later period; the fact remains that they are apparent in that earlier period when the beloved disciple figures in the scene¹.

To sum up for the moment. If the sons of Zebedee are explicitly alluded to by the Fourth Evangelist it is not in such a way as to suggest special prominence. Beyond doubt there are connecting links, striking coincidences, which are more or less in favour of the identification of John the Apostle with the beloved disciple: the hint, if hint it be, at a common occupation; in each case, perhaps, some little means; a connection, however explained, with priestly families; intimate discipleship with Jesus; a certain tendency to reticence; a devotion to the one cause. Of all the coincidences there is not one more striking than the repeated coupling with Peter;—it might, indeed, be decisive were there not a great deal to be considered on the other side. There are dissimilarities in regard

¹ Cf. Keim, *Jesus von Nazara*, I. 160.

to type of character. If the one be steadfast by the cross the other is, apparently, not there. If the one seem a dweller at Jerusalem, the other's ties are far away. There is an apparent difference of social position; in the one case a man who stands on an equal footing with persons of distinction, in the other a far more homely personage of lowly origin. Is identification really possible when there are such marked differences? But are the differences—in particular those of character and temperament—really so marked? That very designation “the beloved disciple” invites to idealised conceptions; the man pictured in the mind may not be the real man. The real man and John son of Zebedee may have more in common after all.

Here, perhaps, the thought occurs: if John son of Zebedee be actually the beloved disciple he is portrayed in the Fourth Gospel as he appeared, not at the earlier period, but in after years, at the close of a long life.

We are met by a difficulty: the “unsolved problem” of the statement attributed to Papias that John, like his brother James, died a martyr's death. It may yet turn out that, in the case of the Apostle, the words of Jesus were fulfilled to the letter¹; that he who was to tarry on was not the Apostle but the disciple whom Jesus loved: on the other hand it must not be overlooked that the perplexing statement in question (if

¹ Wellhausen, it will be remembered, contends for a literal fulfilment in the case of both brothers.

actually made) was unknown to or ignored¹ by early writers, that tradition is constant in bringing the son of Zebedee to Asia Minor. He may have quitted Jerusalem on the outbreak of the Jewish war which precipitated the downfall of the Jewish nation. He may have lingered on for a few years at Pella, in the company of other Christian refugees; the date of his final departure from the Holy Land may have been shortly after the Fall of Jerusalem. As has been told us in effect already, "all the accounts of St John's later life resolve themselves into a statement of his residence at Ephesus and of his living to the close of or shortly beyond the close of the first century²." At any rate there is certainly a "John of Ephesus³."

What information, then, is forthcoming respecting one who, surviving at Ephesus, was identified with the Apostle John if also sometimes designated in a way which is calculated to awaken doubt? New Testament

¹ Bousset (*Der Verfasser des Johannesevangeliums*, *Theol. Rundschau*, 1905, p. 228) will remind us "dass man zu allen Zeiten Mittel und Wege gehabt hat, an unbrauchbaren und widersprechenden Ueberlieferungen vorüberzugehen."

² Stanley, *Serm. & Essays on the Apostolic Age*.

³ Those who reject the Ephesian residence of the Apostle sometimes appeal to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The Pauline authorship is denied, it is assigned to a later date; then its silence with regard to the Apostle is deemed conclusive (cf. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, II. 2511). But the objection falls to the ground if the Pauline authorship of the Epistle be established (cf. J. Armitage Robinson, *Ephesians*, pp. 11-13).

sources are no longer available. The region now to be explored is one of "somewhat fragmentary tradition¹."

According to three stories John knows what it is to "suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." In the first story the scene is laid in front of the Latin Gate at Rome; he is placed in a cauldron of boiling oil, but he is miraculously preserved from injury². According to a second he drinks the hemlock-cup unharmed. In a third he is condemned to banishment; then the exile of the island of Patmos appears later on as presiding over the Churches in Asia³.

And there is a group of stories connected with the Ephesian residence. It is St John who seeks out and reclaims the robber-youth⁴. He goes to the public baths, but, discovering Cerinthus, he rushes out himself and exhorts others to do the same: "let us flee lest the bath fall in with that enemy of the truth within⁵." He had worn the "petalon," the golden frontlet of high-priestly attire⁶. The divine power is manifested as a dead man is raised to life by him⁷. To a huntsman who, finding him stroking a tame partridge,

¹ Hastings' *D. B.*, II. 681.

² Tertullian. Commemorated on May 6th; St John Evang. ante Portam Latinam.

³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 18, 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III. 23.

⁵ Iren. Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 28; IV. 14.

⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III. 31.

⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V. 18. Cf. Traub, *Die Wunder im N. T.*, pp. 45, 46.

expresses astonishment that so illustrious a personage should condescend to such trivial amusement, he replies in words which have become proverbial: "the bow cannot always be bent¹." He is asked by the Ephesian elders to pen his Gospel; as if suddenly inspired he gives utterance to its opening words². Exquisitely beautiful is the narrative which records what has been called his last Will and Testament³: he is in extreme old age; he is still carried into the church, but it is but to reiterate the same saying, "Little children, love one another"; as those who are at last wearied by the incessant repetition ask, "Master, why do you always say the same thing?" he replies: "Because it is the Lord's command, and if that be obeyed it suffices⁴." He is ever virgin⁵. Death has no power over him; he sleeps on in his grave at Ephesus; his breathing causes a movement of the ground, said to be witnessed by visitors to the place of sepulture⁶.

That the region is not only of "fragmentary tradition" but of legend is apparent. Of some of the stories it must be owned that the authority is but

¹ Cassianus.

² Jerome, *De Vir. Illustr.*

³ Lessing, *Das Testament Johannis.*

⁴ Jerome, *Epis. ad Galat.*

⁵ *Monarch. Prolog.*

⁶ Augustine, *Tract. in Johan.*, 124. For some notice of most of the stories above referred to see Couard, *Altchrist. Sagen über das Leben der Apostel* (*Neue Kirchl. Zeitschr.*, xiv. 1903, p. 154).

slight; of others that they are "alien not only to the simplicity of Apostolic times, but to the reasonableness of Christianity itself¹. To set them all aside as mere creations of a pious fancy is impossible; it may be well believed that here and there there is a basis of fact, that the narrative does really point back to historical event or incident. Thus, perhaps, with the stories of the partridge, of the robber-youth, of the encounter with the heretic Cerinthus. Not readily to be discarded is the episode of the last Will and Testament². There may be something in the allusion to the "priest who wore the petalon."

An element of truth, perhaps more than an element, is, then, to be admitted in some of the "fragmentary traditions" respecting John of Asia Minor. The question now arises: who is discoverable in them, the son of Zebedee or the beloved disciple? Are they, on the other hand, conclusive for identification?

One thing is certain. The identification is already made by the narrators of the stories. He of whom they believe themselves speaking is John, Evangelist, Apostle, disciple beloved of Jesus. Perchance they think of him as martyr in will if not in deed: his Master and Lord "vouchsafing him the honour of

¹ Stanley, *Sermons on Apost. Age*.

² Not the prologue to the Gospel but the touching command of John is, according to Lessing (*Das Testament Johannis*), worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold where all may read them in our churches. Cf. Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, II. 137 (note).

martyrdom, without his enduring the torments of it¹," before the Latin Gate at Rome. There remains a possibility that they have confused two distinct personages.

It is equally certain that the beloved disciple lives again in the traditions. No great stretch of imagination is required to discover him in the narrative of the robber-youth. That last Will and Testament is precisely what might be expected of him. If the story of the partridge can be relied on it is in perfect harmony with the character and temperament apparently revealed by the Fourth Gospel.

Equally certain is it that there are vivid reminders of the son of Zebedee. There may be one of them in that very story of the robber-youth: a touch of the old impetuosity is perhaps discernible in the rebuke administered to the neglectful bishop by the one who has entrusted to his keeping a brother's soul. The intolerance of earlier days may have been transformed; there is at least a flash of it in him who cannot brook the presence of Cerinthus. If that designation Boanerges be really indicative of fiery zeal issuing in vehement words, then it is far from inapplicable at the later period. There is, in short, much which, capable of transference from the one to the other, may reveal in the end the single personage. The saying that "love begets love" has point perhaps in the case of the

¹ Wheatley, *Common Prayer*, p. 64.

beloved disciple; it may have equal application in the case of the son of Zebedee: if he too shares the affection of Jesus it surely argues an affection which he has it in him to bestow. What if it be really he whose soul yearns over the robber-youth whom he will not leave until he has brought him to a better mind? If his anger flashes forth against Cerinthus he is deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of those whom the heretic may lead astray. Quite possible that those touching words, "love one another," may have come from him in extreme old age, when his character has ripened to perfection. And again; what if too much rein has been given to the imagination in the case of the beloved disciple? Too readily, perhaps, has he been conceived of as of calm and unruffled temperament; the feminine is accentuated, the masculine ignored, in the pictures drawn of him. There is nothing in the Fourth Gospel to warrant such portraits. He is surely no weak personality, or he would hardly have been singled out for the special regard of Jesus. That he can both dare and do is plain from the narrative which tells of his presence at the trial and the Cross. There is force unmistakable in his character: hence a display might be expected of those very qualities which fix attention in the case of the son of Zebedee, which are illustrated in the traditions of John of Ephesus¹. That appropriated designation might be

¹ If the beloved disciple be author of the smaller Johannine

significant; if ambition has gone "the vanity of an old man¹" may remain.

There is more to be said. If the two personalities can thus be brought into some sort of unison there are also connecting links which appear to be in favour of identification. John of Ephesus has attained to a position of recognised pre-eminence; the son of Zebedee has held a foremost place as one of the three leaders of the infant Church. The former is evidently quite at home in a Greek-speaking community; the latter, as a young man, will have acquired more than a smattering of Greek, and plenty of time will have elapsed for him to increase his knowledge of the language. If the former has worn the "petalon," both son of Zebedee and beloved disciple are alluded to as in some way related to or connected with a priestly family.

Is the process of identification finally completed, and to entire satisfaction?

There can be no thought of speaking a decisive word. It may indeed appear that there is a preponderance of evidence in support of the theory that John of Ephesus is none other than the son of Zebedee of direct information and the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel. To repeat the arguments in briefest

Epistles there will be point in the impetuous allusion to Diotrephes in the third, vv. 9, 10; cf. von Dobschütz, *Christian Life &c.*, pp. 221, 222.

¹ Renan, *Les Évangiles*.

summary: reconciliation is not impracticable in the case of "fragmentary tradition"; other notices affirm or imply intimate relations with Jesus, a tendency to reticence, the possession of some means, a knowledge of Greek, priestly connections, companionship with Peter, acknowledged leadership. That some of the links in the chain of evidence are weaker than others may be admitted; taken cumulatively the evidence is strong—almost to conviction.

Almost to conviction. There are still difficulties, and they militate against the winding-up of absolute certainty. They may not be insuperable in the light of fuller knowledge; at present they appear to be very real difficulties.

A first difficulty. We are pointed to the statement attributed to Papias. A problem still unsolved confronts us; what may its solution have in store? There is at least a possibility that John son of Zebedee must be thought of with others "that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held¹." Room may have to be found somehow for the death by martyrdom.

A second difficulty. We are pointed to questions of circumstance and condition. In both cases the

¹ It is certainly remarkable that John and James are coupled together in the *Martyrologium Syriacum*. Aphraates (*Texte und Untersuch.*, III. 3, 4, 1888, p. 347) speaks of them as having trod the same path as their master Christ. See Bousset, *Der Verfasser des Johannesevangeliums*, *Theol. Rundschau*, 1905, pp. 225 ff.

possession of means of some sort may be allowed; it is not so easy to allow a common trade. The impression still remains that there is a difference of rank; that the social position of the beloved disciple is in some degree superior to that of the son of Zebedee.

A third difficulty. John son of Zebedee is a disciple from the very first: as for the beloved disciple, he may, indeed, be the nameless one of i. 35-40; not until the closing scenes does he emerge into full view¹.

A fourth difficulty. We are pointed to Calvary. The beloved disciple is standing by the Cross; the question still arises: what has become of the Apostle John?

In view of these difficulties it must be said that the evidence is far from conclusive for the identification of the Apostle John with the beloved disciple, and, accordingly, with the conjectured author of the Fourth Gospel².

The latter, in any case, lives on as John of Ephesus. Here we remind ourselves that, if (on certain assumptions) the Apocalypse can be attributed to the Fourth Evangelist, there is also the contingency of its requiring another author of the same name. If so there may be

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 431 f.

² The evidence *is* conclusive for Horn. "Wir kommen nach sorgsamer Abwägung von 'Für' und 'Wider' doch zu dem Schluss dass der Lieblingsjunger der Apos. Johan ist." *Abfassungszeit &c.*, p. 7.

two Johns of Ephesus to be reckoned with; the story of the two tombs may have something in it. Accordingly we end here with the recognition of a bare possibility: John son of Zebedee and John the beloved disciple may both of them have spent the evening of their days in Asia Minor¹.

¹ Is it but a bare possibility? Strauss suggested that sufficient attention had not been paid to the circumstance that there were two Johns, the Apostle and the Presbyter, living contemporaneously at Ephesus (*Life of Jesus*, p. 73). Tradition is certainly constant in bringing the son of Zebedee to Ephesus; John the Presbyter, a real personage, appears to have dwelt in Asia Minor. One cannot but feel, however, that there is force in von Soden's remarks on two traditions combined, at the end of the third century, in "the assertion that two Johns had lived in Ephesus, the Apostle and the Elder—of the first of whom the second century knew absolutely nothing, while the third century knew nothing of the second" (*Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 429 f., 426).

CONCLUSION.

OUR inquiry has nearly reached its close. We pause for a moment for the retrospect.

“It is time to go back to Christ.” Such, it was said, was the cry heard yet again in our own age, from many quarters and in varied note. We noted its significance: how it told its own tale of a recognised ascendancy of Jesus over the minds of men. We remarked a wide-spread eagerness “for the fullest and most exact knowledge possible of the historic life and ministry of Jesus”: it was to dwell on right views as to the aim and object of Bible students as they question the sources from which that full and exact knowledge is to be derived; not from mere curiosity, but as conscious of and responsive to yearnings to get “back to Jesus.” The methods and processes of modern critical investigation were then glanced at. As helpful results of criticism in its application to the Old Testament were realised, the decision was made to welcome it in its inevitable application to the New Testament, to those historical documents which make up “the holy quaternion of the Gospels.” Attention was then centred

on "the Gospel according to St John"; the "favourite Gospel"; the Gospel still dear as of old to the heart of Christendom. It was thought of as treasured and read by numbers who, alive to its "tender and unearthly beauty," hold its title conclusive as to authorship, its contents literally true in their every detail. Quickly it was borne in upon us that the Gospel so highly prized had long ceased to meet with unquestioning and general acceptance. Account was taken of objections raised a century and more ago; of objections raised to-day—and frequently in terms almost identical with those used by earlier critics. A vast mass of literature was found testifying to the fact that "the problem of the Fourth Gospel was still the most unsettled, the most sensitive, the most living," in all the field of New Testament criticism. We heard of attack and defence; of the Johannine authorship denied and asserted; of the historicity of the Gospel contended for and disallowed; further, of a variety of shades of opinion between the two extreme positions. In short, the nature of the questions raised was indicated, their importance realised; then the resolve was made to attempt some independent study of them, and in so doing to give a hearing to representatives of differing schools of thought. It was agreed, to begin with, that, certain reservations made, the Fourth Gospel was no composite work but a unity; the production, in the main, of a single author. We went on to seek for earliest traces

of its existence and recognition: ancient authorities were questioned; their statements considered and allowed due weight. We passed from external to internal evidence: it was to scrutinise the Gospel itself: hints, allusions, assertions as to authorship were sought for and examined into; inquiry was made whether its contents throughout were suggestive or not of first-hand knowledge of circumstances and events narrated. Fourth Gospel and Synoptics were then placed side by side; the two representations compared; an admitted contrast followed up in regard to leading points. The last stage was reached when, in the preceding section, there was discussion of inferences to be drawn from direct information respecting the traditional author of the Gospel, the Apostle John.

Wide, indeed, is the field which has been opened out to us. In reality the field is a wider one; we have had but a part of it. Nor has that part been fully and completely explored, far from it. We have only skimmed the surface of the many delicate and intricate questions bound up in what is justly spoken of as the "chief problem of all Bible-criticism¹." It would be absurd to suppose that difficulties have been solved; indeed the chances are that for some of them there is no solution. And yet the inquiry which has occupied us, stimulating and interesting as it has been, should not be altogether fruitless. Perhaps there are some

¹ Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 103.

few results; perhaps some very tentative conclusions may be ventured, and that without thought of speaking last words on any single point.

What, then, are we disposed to say about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, the historicity of its contents, its permanent value?

The two extreme positions shall again be stated, and baldly. As for the one, it points to the popular belief that the Fourth Evangelist is John, son of Zebedee, Apostle, beloved disciple; that his Gospel from beginning to end is the absolutely true narrative. As for the other, we are made to think of positive rejection of the Johannine authorship and historicity of the Fourth Gospel; it is either definitely assigned to another than the Apostle or to a "great unknown"; it is alleged to contain, not history, but poetic religious fiction. The former theory, it should be remembered, is maintained in its entirety by few, if any, Bible students: if the Johannine authorship be vigorously pressed, there is a readiness to make more or less limited concessions with regard to the contents. The latter theory, of course, means this: the Fourth Gospel is ruled out as a source of information for the life and ministry of Jesus¹.

To neither of these extreme positions do we assent.

¹ "We can never make the Fourth Gospel our standard," says Arno Neumann, *Jesus*, p. 7. See also the preface (pp. xxv. f.) contributed by Prof. Schmiedel.

Obviously, the former must be set aside : doubt remains as to the identity of the Evangelist ; the extreme subjectivity of his work has been fully recognised. The latter must equally be rejected ; it has seemed that the author is one of those who had companied with Jesus ; that substantial truth is embodied in his Gospel.

Evidently the standpoint adopted will lie somewhere between the two extremes. Let us attempt to define it ; and first of all with regard to the question of authorship.

The Fourth Gospel, so we are inclined to believe, is really traceable to one who had first-hand knowledge of what he relates. He himself claims to be an eye-witness, others advance the claim on his behalf ; on the whole we are disposed to allow the claim. Whoever the author be he was surely of the number of the first disciples.

Accordingly, we look for him among the associates of Jesus. It is possible—not certain—that he has attached himself to Jesus at an early stage. That he is no ordinary disciple appears evident. The place occupied by him has been very near to Jesus ; the intimacy to which he has been admitted singularly close. Of one thus distinguished above all the rest there would seem to be no mention in the Synoptic Gospels ; there is express reference to such a one in the Fourth Gospel, and he appears to be the very type of person from whom such a Gospel might be expected.

In spite of being warned away from him¹ we ultimately turn to "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It appears at least probable that he is the eye-witness in question. Are we able to go a step further and say unhesitatingly that he is to be identified with John the Apostle and son of Zebedee?

We are not. It is within the bounds of probability that the beloved disciple is the Fourth Evangelist. Possibly he is the son of Zebedee:—beyond that "possibly" we are not prepared to go. There is room for doubt. And it is not simply that we question the ability of the son of Zebedee to have penned the Gospel. The ranks of literature have again and again been recruited from the humbler walks of life. The quondam Galilæan fisherman might have developed into the author. This Fourth Gospel might have come from him; for, as we have seen already, it by no means argues that its author was a master in the field of letters. Of parts of it the remark has been made that the style "is of exactly the kind which we should have expected in the composition of a man of Palestine, in that age, who had received no scholastic education²."

No. We admit that there are many reasons for identifying the beloved disciple of our conjecture with

¹ Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 415. "It is the one unassailable position...that its author was not 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'" Cf. von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 435.

² Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, pp. 220 ff.

the Apostle John¹. That repeated coupling with Peter is exceedingly significant. Beyond doubt the Fourth Gospel was written in Asia Minor; well—it is hard to believe that the son of Zebedee did not actually find his way to Ephesus. Again and again we seem to discern him in the John of later story, legend, “fragmentary tradition.” That he is so persistently pointed to as author is at least suggestive that “in some way or other he stands behind” the Gospel which bears his name. But for considerations not lightly to be ignored we should own forthwith that the case for identification is made out.

What are those considerations? There is the question, to begin with, whether the son of Zebedee is to be found by the Cross of Jesus. Secondly, there is the statement attributed to Papias (and in full keeping with the prophecy of Jesus) that John, like his brother James, died a martyr’s death: it may be decisive against the Johannine authorship; at least it occasions difficulty. Once more, the impression remains that there is a difference of social status: the son of Zebedee a Galilaean peasant, the beloved disciple (if it be really he who is alluded to as known to the high priest²) the

¹ It is impossible not to sympathise with Fouart when he writes: “we are haunted by the feeling that between this Apostle and the anonymous author of the book there is a connection so intimate as to strongly suggest a personal identity.” *St John and the close of the Apost. Age*, p. xviii.

² It is surely the beloved disciple. H. J. Holtzmann regards it as

“gentleman by birth.” And again, is it so certain that the latter was a disciple from the very first?

The Fourth Evangelist, then, may be the beloved disciple. There is a possibility that he is the son of Zebedee. If he be not the Apostle John (and we question whether he be), who is he?

Wernle has wisely urged the desirability of the “I do not know¹.” There is need of an “I do not know” here:—of confident answer there can be none whatever; suggestions and conjectures are alike precarious. That the beloved disciple is the “Presbyter” of later years is possible: the question, however, now relates to days when he companied with Jesus. Is he really the Jerusalemite? Is he not only known to but related² to the high priest? If so, is he a member of the priestly aristocracy? He is evidently in his earlier manhood; is he the “certain young man” of the Marcan narrative? And he is well-to-do: is he, then, owner of the house in which the Last Supper was held, and himself present as the host? Young, possessed of means, loved by Jesus with the love of moral choice, our thoughts perhaps turn to the rich young man of the Synoptic story; we ask: might not one who, unable at the time to stand the test, was even then doubtful (*Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 18); von Soden favours the supposition that he is (*Early Christ. Literature*, p. 432); cf. Aug. *Tractate cxiii*.

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 2.

² Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Evan. des Johannes*, p. 23.

beloved, have come to be the devoted friend of Jesus? —the suggestion, if tempting, must fall to the ground if discipleship from the very first be absolutely certain. Is he one of those who shrank from making public avowal of their belief in Jesus?—surely not; there is nothing suggestive of hesitation to profess allegiance.

To have done with such conjectures. Tentative is the conclusion which discovers the author of the Fourth Gospel in the beloved disciple. That the latter is the son of Zebedee is doubtful¹; on the assumption that he is not, his identity remains an open question.

Thus much of him in earlier days. Thought of in connection with the Gospel he is, of necessity, the old man full of years; is old age decisive argument against his authorship²? By no means. Cases innumerable might be instanced in which mental activities have lasted on beyond the allotted threescore years and

¹ If there be considerations which weigh against the identification of the beloved disciple with the Apostle John, a difficulty confronts us if we decide for two distinct persons of whom the former is the Evangelist. The question will at least be asked: what, then, becomes of the admission that in some way or other John, son of Zebedee, "stands behind" the Fourth Gospel? It must be confessed that the question is not easily answered. The suggestion might, indeed, be thrown out that the beloved disciple has gone to the Apostle John (and perhaps at Ephesus) for information respecting the earlier, in particular the Galilaeen, ministry. Only then the objection might hold good that he sets down details with the precision of one who was himself an eye-witness of at all events some of the occurrences in question.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 416.

ten¹; men far advanced in years have still been engaged in literary production. Besides, how old would he be? Shall we see in him the young man of between 20 and 30 at the date of the Crucifixion? shall we assume further that the Fourth Gospel was written A.D. 80-110? In that case he might indeed be already the centenarian. He may, on the other hand, be still under 80, not much over 70. There is nothing here which renders it absolutely impossible that the Fourth Gospel should have come from him².

Thus much on the question of authorship. It will be remarked that we have parted company from the two writers whose works have given us a lead. The one (Barth) decides for the Johannine authorship; the Apostle John has not been plainly discovered to ourselves as the Evangelist. The other (Wernle)

¹ Gladstone is a case in point; so also Dr Martineau. Goethe and Tennyson were over 80. Roget, when over 90, was still engaged on his *Thesaurus*. A former Chief Justice of New South Wales, the late Sir Alfred Stephen, was remarkable for faculties still vigorous up to a comparatively short time before his death at the age of 93; cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 28.

² He may have employed an amanuensis. If so, the latter would take down at his dictation, perhaps give polishing touches; he would still be the author. And his amanuensis would be his devoted pupil: might not such a pupil have himself inserted the famous verse, xix. 35? In that case the "he that hath seen" will be the revered master, the beloved disciple. The question remains, of whom is the "that man" to be explained if we are bound to interpret it of a third person? Hardly the son of Zebedee; if the latter were only one of those who stood "afar off." Vide *supra*, p. 91.

discovers the secondary historian; our thoughts are of an eye-witness who is conceivably the beloved disciple.

From the question of authorship—a question answered but tentatively and with the still open mind¹—we turn now to the Fourth Gospel itself. What shall we find ourselves saying—and again tentatively—with regard to its contents?

It is the Gospel, so we cannot but infer, of a very old man. It is the Gospel, therefore, of one whose gaze reaches back over long years chequered by events and charged with a variety of experiences. It is the Gospel, be it added, of one who shares the limitations of his own age. It is the Gospel, beyond doubt, of no ordinary man; of one more highly cultured, perhaps, than other companions of Jesus; he may be neither classical scholar nor steeped in rabbinical lore, but he is well educated; vigorous is his intellect; the type of mind revealed is a singularly reflective type; there are traits which bespeak one who has pondered over all that he has seen and heard, who is capable of great conceptions, who has known what it is to be “stung by the splendour of a sudden thought.” Further, it is the Gospel of late date; of a date late enough for other New Testament writings to have been composed,

¹ “It may be that in our Fourth Gospel we have the teaching of St John turned to account by the thought and labour of another mind, possibly one of larger grasp.” Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 238. “The teaching,” as we venture to think, of the beloved disciple.

circulated, become generally known:—it will be written, accordingly, with some knowledge of the Synoptics on the part not only of its author but of those for whom he writes; the probability—may we not say, the certainty?—is that, knowing of the work done by St Paul, he is familiar with Pauline Epistles, he has assimilated something of the Pauline spirit. The late Gospel, the Gospel penned in the light of long and varied experiences by a singularly reflective mind, the Gospel of an aged disciple, it is the Gospel penned—we cannot but believe—by a Jew¹, a Palestinian Jew, conceivably a Jerusalemite; but he is one who long ago bade farewell to the scenes of his earlier manhood. It is the Gospel dating from a day when the great catastrophe is a thing of the past; when the Fall of Jerusalem is looked back to and apprehended in its full significance as at once the wrecking of misplaced hopes and the dawn of a new order which is bright with promise. And it is the Gospel which has its birth in a place where there is the throb and stir of movement, the many and varied interests, the meeting of religious cults, a proneness to the speculative, distracting influences for the Christian communities. For it is penned at Ephesus:—the greatest emporium of Asia, centre of the Roman administration, meeting-place of the great roads which traversed the district,

¹ “He is certainly of Jewish origin; his speech bewrayeth him.” von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 420.

the mart resorted to by foreigners from all parts, the abode of numbers of Jews, the head-quarters of a surrounding heathenism.

What do we find—what might we expect to find, what not to find—in the Gospel which comes from such an author and from such conditions?

The Gospel composed by one who is full of years. Inspiration, we remember, does not pre-suppose infallibility; hence there will be no cause for surprise should inaccuracies be apparent. They will be readily, and naturally, accounted for:—by recollections which have become blurred and indistinct with the lapse of time, by confused memories. That unimportant details should remain fixed in the author's mind, that he should also be apt to transpose events, perhaps to allude to this event or that circumstance in a way more suggestive of present surroundings than of the actual time and place, is precisely what might be expected in the case of an old man.

The Gospel of one sharing the limitations of his age. Inspiration, again, does not pre-suppose exact scientific knowledge; hence we approach the miracle-stories as not pledged to the acceptance of one and all in the precise form in which they are narrated, even if we be slow to speak of "exuberance of legend"¹ whenever the unintelligible meets us. Of the "signs" recorded in the Fourth Gospel there are some which,

¹ Cf. Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 26.

after all, impose no serious difficulty; in the case of others we shall, perhaps, say that they point, now to some saying which came to be interpreted of an actual occurrence¹, now to descriptions which satisfied the knowledge of the age.

The Gospel of one who was no ordinary man. Inspiration, be it again remembered, does not stifle individuality; it allows full scope for it. Not for a single moment, then, do we look for strict historicity, a scrupulous regard to bare facts, photographic reproductions of scenes and events, the shorthand reporter's *verbatim* account of all that has been told and heard. On the contrary, we find, as we expect to find, a large freedom exercised in the representation. That events pictured did really take place may be conceded; but it is the connection in which they stand, the purpose they are made to serve, which is the main thing. Of *ipsissima verba* throughout there can be no question. Historical personages figure on the scene, but they speak, not their own words, but words in which the author will clothe his own thoughts. The Fourth Evangelist does indeed preserve the gist, the substance, of this or that conversation or discourse²; but he condenses here and he expands there, his report is given in his own language. "As for the numerous discourses which are placed in the mouth of Jesus, and

¹ Arno Newmann, *Jesus*, p. 86.

² Reuss, *Geschichte d. heil. Schriften d. N. T.*, p. 209.

which really constitute the kernel and the substance of the book, in respect to form and setting we hold them to be the work of the Evangelist himself¹."

The Gospel traceable to one who has pondered over all that he has himself seen and heard in a remote past. That aged disciple, we cannot but believe, had seen and heard Jesus. He had been admitted to a peculiar intimacy with Jesus. He may be credited with deeper insight than his fellows and higher powers of perception. Already, in that remote past, he has been capable, above the rest, of entering into the mind of Jesus. That which has impressed him above all else is the mysterious personality of Jesus—the marvellous blending of utter humility and supreme dignity which renders Jesus unique. At length, when the time comes for him to set down his matured thoughts, he can but give all prominence to what has all along been uppermost in his own mind. The result is, not a biography, but that soul-portrait which, without obliterating the humanity, accentuates the divine.

The Gospel composed with a knowledge of the Synoptics² which is shared by others. Obviously—and apart from questions of purpose—there will be omissions: what need to go over ground which has been already covered, and sufficiently? As obviously, something will be supplied where the Synoptic narra-

¹ Reuss, *Geschichte d. heil. Schriften d. N.T.*, p. 208.

² See Keim, *Jesus von Nazara*, I. 118.

tive, defective and confused as it has been seen to be, necessitates and invites supplementing¹. Because better informed on some points the "aged Christian disciple" will not hesitate to clear up misapprehensions and to correct mistakes. If he be not always concerned for strict historical detail we shall bear in mind that this Fourth Gospel is no biography, but a delineation of that which has impressed itself most strongly on its author's mind.

The Gospel which has a Pauline ring about it; which, as well by contrasts as resemblances, awakens thoughts of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

A preliminary question: had the Fourth Evangelist been personally acquainted with St Paul? If he be really the son of Zebedee the answer will, of course, be in the affirmative: he had known Saul the persecutor of the Christians; he had heard of the "wonderful conversion" which was fraught with such momentous issues; he had looked on from a distance at the doings of the great missionary; he had listened to St Paul's own accounts of progress in the wider mission-field; the possibility is that the interview at Jerusalem to which St Paul refers was followed by other interviews of a more private nature; deep may have been the impression made on St John's mind then; the resolve may have been speedily taken, and as the direct outcome of prolonged intercourse, to shake himself free

¹ But see Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz &c.*, p. 40.

from old prejudices. But proof positive that he is the son of Zebedee has not been forthcoming. He is, so we have conjectured, the beloved disciple; but with the identity of the latter still in doubt, there is nothing on which conjectures as to intimate acquaintanceship with St Paul may be safely based. Surely the two men must have come into personal contact at Jerusalem. That they met in after years at Ephesus is hardly to be thought of: the date of St Paul's last recorded interview with "the elders" would be antecedent to the arrival on the scene of the Fourth Evangelist. Little would the former then dream that a day was coming when the Ephesian churches would welcome one who had been the intimate friend of Jesus¹.

Personally acquainted with St Paul or not, the Fourth Evangelist has evidently drunk deeply of the Pauline spirit; Pauline Epistles have come into his hands and been read by him. The Gospel is frequently suggestive of Paul's range of thought and manner of expression: if there be no direct quotations "we are reminded often enough of Pauline ideas and phrases²." We turn to Rom. vi. 16: it is to read of those who yield themselves servants of sin unto death; we turn to John viii. 34 and it is to be told that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Again, in

¹ Cf. Acts xx. 29, 30; where St Paul's thought is solely of impending dangers.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 397; cf. von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 424.

Rom. x. 16 St Paul quotes from Isaiah when telling that "they have not all obeyed the gospel"; in John xii. 38 the Fourth Evangelist, recounting the unbelief of many, falls back on the same quotation. And so, perhaps, in Rom. ii. 28, 29, where St Paul draws a sharp distinction between the Jew outwardly and the Jew inwardly; there is surely a similar thought in John i. 47, where the portrait is drawn of "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." If there are resemblances in diction, there are also resemblances of idea; the same breadth of view is to be remarked, the same great conception of the universality of the work of Jesus. St Paul has risen to thoughts of mankind compacted together into unity¹; the Fourth Evangelist will set down words which tell of One who, lifted up from the earth, will draw all men, all things to Himself². The former sees an end to racial separations and distinctions³; the latter tells of Greeks in their eagerness to see Jesus⁴.

There are traces of Pauline influences in the Fourth Gospel. It is clear, however, that, in respect to at least two points, the situation has changed since St Paul's day. In the first place, difficulties which pressed heavily on St Paul have practically ceased to exist for the Fourth Evangelist. The former is encountered by opposition as he raises his great war-cry

¹ Eph. i. 10; iv. 13. Even if "Ephesians" be not by St Paul himself it surely points back to genuine Pauline utterances.

² John xii. 32.

³ Col. iii. 11.

⁴ John xii. 20.

of "freedom from the Law," and vehemently maintains the vital principle that "belief in Christ implies the entire repudiation of the righteousness of the Law for the Jews, and that he who has become a Christian is *ipso facto* delivered from Gentile pollution¹." For the latter there is no longer need of battlings for emancipation from a yoke of bondage. The Fall of Jerusalem had taken place, and it had meant the snapping of old ties: Judaistic Christians were at once parted from the Jewish nation and from non-Jewish Christians; they became isolated, and in their isolation they sank into a state of torpor; traces of their existence are subsequently met with, but later Judaism is unaffected by them, and they are entirely destitute of influence on the enlarged and enlarging Church². By the time that the Fourth Gospel was penned its author had long broken with Judaism; the Church had long ceased to be concerned with matters of ceremonial observance³. If the Law be alluded to in the Gospel it is now specifically the Law of "the Jews." A "new commandment" may be said to have replaced it for the Christian communities; they are pointed to the Law of Love. Secondly; the standpoint has become different in relation to the Jews themselves. The Jewish nation-

¹ von Dobschütz, *Das Apos. Zeitalter*, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³ Cf. Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 398; Reuss, *Geschichte d. heil. Schriften d. N. T.*, p. 204: "Die Lebensfrage in der ersten Kirche, von der Geltung des Gesetzes, berührt es (das Ev.) nicht."

ality of the Fourth Evangelist has been regarded as established; it has been said that his use of the term "the Jews" may be partly accounted for by the fact that he is writing for foreigners in a foreign land; it must be added now that his position is, after all, in contrast with that of St Paul. The latter will glory in his Jewish birth; if he mourns the stubbornness of the chosen people he can dwell on their advantages; if he turns from Jew to Gentile it is still as cherishing high hopes for Israel. There is, in truth, little to suggest such an attitude in the pages of the Fourth Gospel. We fail, perhaps, to discover notes struck which justify the sharp summing-up: "the Jews for the devil, the Gentiles for Jesus and for God¹!" At the same time, we can but feel that, for the Fourth Evangelist, "the Jews" are irreconcilables. They have preferred darkness to light. They have rejected Jesus.

Yet one other point. It is urged that "the deification of Jesus, for which Paul had opened the way, was inexorably carried out by John to its furthest conclusion²." Mindful of a decision arrived at in a preceding chapter³ we can but ask here whether the assertion be entirely warranted by the facts. Beyond question, the Fourth Evangelist accentuates the divine; and it may be admitted that he gives expanded

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 22.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 400.

³ Vide *supra*, pp. 164, 165.

expression to conceptions of the person of Jesus which had been gradually shaping themselves in the minds of other Christian thinkers; as will be noticed presently, he makes choice of a remarkable term by which to set forth all that he himself has come to feel. Beyond question also is it that the divinity of Jesus is emphasised by St Paul: and in a way which, perhaps, shows him struggling to coin a language in which to clothe great thoughts which dominate his soul. It surely remains a fact that St Paul is but a follower where others have led the way. The way has been already opened out to him. We can but feel it to be a case in which divinity, already apprehended and owned, has been seized upon and earnestly proclaimed. That there were differences between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the members of the Mother-Church at Jerusalem goes without saying: what, however, were the questions at issue? They had reference to policy, to methods of procedure, to questions of legal obligation, to the scope of Christian enterprise; there is surely nothing to indicate divergence of opinion with regard to doctrine, to the Founder of the new religion. On the contrary, there is evidence that St Paul and the other Apostles were at one in the view held by them of Him who was their Lord and Master. The Jesus whom St Paul preached was a Jesus already recognised as more than mere man. In respect to terminology and manner of expression development may be frankly admitted—development only to be

expected—in the case alike of St Paul and of the Fourth Evangelist. May it not be development, not along the lines of growing misapprehension, but from the fountain-head of substantial truth?

The Gospel penned at Ephesus, and for the Christian communities of Asia Minor.

“So, then, we find ourselves on Greek soil, we are breathing a Greek atmosphere¹.” In so far as they pointed to locality of composition the truth of these words has already been admitted; a further admission is necessitated as we remark characteristics of the Gospel which appear to reveal influences of Greek thought which would naturally make themselves felt at a great centre such as Ephesus². If the Fourth Evangelist has not scrupled to avail himself of the opportunities within his reach during long years of Ephesian residence to increase his knowledge of the Greek language, he has also acquired something of Greek philosophy; he has appropriated philosophical ideas of the Alexandrian school³. And he will use his knowledge to make great truths which have become part of his very being intelligible to those Hellenic minds amongst whom he lives and for whom he composes his very “noble work.”

It is impossible to do more than indicate, and in

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 28.

² Cf. Stanton, *Gospels as Hist. Documents*, p. 238.

³ Cf. J. B. Mayor, *Ep. of St James*, p. ccx; von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 423.

bare outline, features which appear to make it evident that Judæan soil has been quitted, and that the Fourth Gospel places us in "some meeting-place of Jewish and Hellenic culture, where, as in Alexandria or Ephesus, the national hopes of Israel were accommodated to new views of the world and life¹."

The studied arrangement of the Gospel might here be noticed. It is constructed "with a system of trinities carried out with equal persistency in small things as in great²"; it "falls into three main divisions framed as it were in an overture (ch. i.) and a finale (ch. xviii.—xx., xxi.)³." And each of these main divisions again falls into three cycles which respectively develop great themes. This studied arrangement of material may be in itself significant that he who composed the work was not so much concerned to pen what we call history as to emphasise his own ideas of the personality and character of the One whom (so we cannot but believe) he had known and loved.

The structure of the Gospel is certainly remarkable. But we pass on to remark a significance in its tone, its

¹ Carpenter, *Bible in XIXth Cent.*, pp. 42 f. O. Holtzmann remarks: "Grade einem paulinisch gebildeten Christen, als welchen wir ja den Johannesevangelisten schon zur Genüge kennen gelernt haben, lag ein Versuch, die bisherige christliche Heilslehre in Griechische Formen umzuschmelzen, besonders nahe." *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 90.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 384; cf. Bacon, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 253.

³ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 403 ff.

terminology, the changed conceptions discoverable in its pages. Stress is laid upon knowledge. There are the ever-recurring contrasts, abstractions. The Evangelist will ever spiritualise; certainly he spiritualises when the question turns on the outward and visible coming of Jesus of which so much is said in the Synoptic Gospels. "The grand scenic display which will usher in the new age, the Son of Man with angel-retinue and trumpet-blast descending from the sky, the rising multitude caught up from earth to meet him in the air—these have all vanished¹." Echoes of the Synoptic conception remain, but they are echoes which are but faintly heard; the thought is rather of a divine presence in the world's life; of a judgement which is not so much external and in the future as within and continually going on. It is impossible not to concur in the remark that "the Gospel in truly Alexandrian fashion spiritualises the very realistic and genuinely Jewish conceptions concerning Resurrection and Judgement which are found in the Book of Revelation²." If that Book be really from the same pen as the Fourth Gospel its author has assuredly assimilated much with

¹ Carpenter, *Bible in XIXth Cent.*, pp. 443 f.

² von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 448. von Dobschütz, alluding to traces of development in the N. T., remarks: "Ich erinnere an die...Eschatologie bei Paulus, die dann vollends bei Johannes ganz verinnerlicht ist." *Der gegenwärtige Stand des N. T.-lichen Exegese*, p. 33. But see Wetzel, *Die geschichtliche Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, *Neue Kirchl. Zeitschr.*, xiv. 1903, p. 678; Lütgert, *Die Joh. Christologie*, p. 111.

the lapse of years, old Jewish conceptions have been left far behind. A time has come when he will so translate and transform them that they may appeal more strongly to Hellenic thought.

And what are we to say of that "exalted term 'the Word'" which, applied to Jesus in the marvellous Prologue¹ to the Gospel, is never again used of Him in the body of the Gospel although it recurs again and again, and in a sense scarcely to be restricted to the sayings of Jesus, to this or that command of His, to the sum of His teaching or revelation; in a sense which has been said to indicate a "divine principle of life²." The subject demands a treatise to itself, nor can we here attempt discussion of arguments for and against the use of the term by the Fourth Evangelist in a way which suggests "some contact with that speculative religious philosophy of the Logos which was formulated by Philo, and became widely current in connection with his name³." That he has appropriated a term already familiar to the schools is beyond question; the probability is that in his own use of it he will not part company from its Hebraic significance, while at the same time he will enter into the workings of Alexandrian thought. For his readers it is "the key which

¹ It is difficult to acquiesce in the suggestion of a friend that the Prologue to the Gospel is not so very profound after all; that it has all the notes of the simplicity of an old man.

² Cf. Carpenter, *Bible in XIXth Cent.*, p. 417.

³ Wendt, *St John's Gospel*, p. 224.

discloses to them the innermost nature of Him whom he wishes to set before them:—He is the incarnate Logos. There is no one English word which coincides with this Greek expression; it embraces both the active reason of God and the means by which He reveals Himself; it signifies a spiritual power, which is absolutely of the Divine essence and yet proceeds from God, as it has declared itself in the creation of the world and is operative in the soul of man. This Logos, clothed in flesh and blood, dwelt among men in complete fulness in Jesus. In Him the glory of this Logos was revealed to the eyes of men¹.”

What special purpose had he in view, this Fourth Evangelist who is not so much biographer or historian as prophet² who will speak forth the great thoughts, the overpowering convictions, which have come to him, and in language influenced by and adapted to his environment³?

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 404. The subject is elaborately discussed by Westcott (*St John*, pp. xiv ff.) who decides, “the teaching of St John is characteristically Hebraic and not Alexandrine”; cf. Stevens, *Johannine Theology*, pp. 74 ff. Drummond writes: “In the doctrine of the Logos he seems to place himself between Jews and Greeks, and to appropriate a common term as the expression of a uniting faith.” *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 419. See also Lütgert, *Die Johan. Christologie*, pp. 159 ff.

² “Er war Visionar und Prophet, er besass einen tiefsinnigen kontemplativen Geist, er war ein praktischer Kirchenmann, und er war doch nie weltlich konnivent.” Seeberg, *Zur Charakteristik des Apos. Johan.*, *Neue Kirchl. Zeitschr.*, xvi. 1905, p. 52.

³ We agree with Wrede: the Fourth Evangelist is “eine Persön-

Many theories have been put forward. He will, indeed, fill in gaps in the Synoptic narrative and supplement it; but to say that his object is historical is to go too far¹. That he is concerned with polemics must be allowed: we may perhaps recognise a thrust at that one of the earliest heresies (Docetism) which asserted that "the suffering Christ was a phantom²"; that if Jesus appeared as a man He was not a real man, that His body was merely simulated, that it was but an immaterial phantasm³. He will also combat erroneous ideas as to the personality of the Baptist which were still prevalent: to regard the Gospel simply and solely as a manifesto against the little Baptist sect is, however, neither warranted by its contents as a whole nor by the circumstances of the case⁴. In so far as a controversial element is discernible in it we can but agree that it is mainly directed against the mass of unbelieving Jews in their bitter hostility and persistent

lichkeit die dem wirklichen Leben zugewendet ist." *Charakter und Tendenz &c.*, p. 68.

¹ "The Synoptists are primarily historians or biographers; the writer of the Fourth Gospel regards history or biography as subservient to direct instruction." Swete, *Studies in the Teaching of our Lord*, p. 128. "Er hat überhaupt nicht in erster Linie beabsichtigt zu erzählen, sondern zu lehren." Wrede, *op. cit.* p. 5.

² Rendel Harris, *Gospel of St Peter*, p. 30. But see Wrede, *op. cit.* p. 60.

³ The Johannine Christ can say "I thirst." And cf. Westcott, *St John*, p. 279: "The issuing of the blood and water...shewed both His true humanity and (in some mysterious sense) the permanence of His human life." Cf. Corssen, *Monarchian. Prologe &c.*, pp. 124 ff.

⁴ So Jülicher (commenting on Baldensperger's theory), *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 423.

efforts to discredit Jesus. The "main purpose" is to "give a comprehensive demonstration, in opposition to the objections of the Jews, of the proposition 'Jesus is the Christ,' and to declare its significance." It "presents an apology for the Christian Faith as opposed to Judaism¹."

But is this to say all that can be said? If so then the Gospel is indeed "throughout Apologetic²," and its author one whose sole concern is to fulminate against the Church's enemies. To adopt this view of him and of his work ceases to be possible as we take account of his own words; they quickly bid us regard him as one who specially addresses himself to the Christian communities amongst whom he lives. He will write *for them*; not simply *against those* whose continued attacks are occasion of distraction. "The faithful" are in his mind; he will instruct them, build them up, lead them on to that life which (as he himself realises) is the outcome of genuine faith in the incarnate Son of God. "The aim of the author, as he himself declares at the close of his book, is to confirm his readers in the faith that Jesus is the Christ in order that they may have life in this faith (xx. 31)³."

To confirm them in the faith; in order that they may have life. "Two aims are here formulated, the

¹ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, pp. 414 f.

² Jülicher, *Introd. to N. T.*, p. 425.

³ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 416.

production of belief in the disciple, and through belief the attainment of life." Of what sort is the belief to be produced in them and in which they are to be confirmed?—there is no question of "a simple intellectual act like the acceptance of a geometrical theorem," the appeal is "addressed to the spiritual affections," there must be self-surrender, implicit trust in and absolute devotion to the person of Jesus. Where such belief exists the "life eternal" has been already entered; that life to which Jesus Himself pointed when He said "he that believeth on me shall never die." Thoughts come to us of "all the new emotions, the new desires, the new hopes, the new aims, the new endeavours, the new outlook on the world, the new affections towards God and man, which filled the believer's soul, and constituted that fresh element of being known in the vocabulary of the early Church as 'life¹.'"

It remains for us to ask: what is the permanent value of this Fourth Gospel which we to-day approach with the consciousness that the last word has not been spoken as to its authorship, and that, whoever its author was, he—assuredly one of the greatest disciples of Jesus²—is not throughout "reporting historical fact" as it would be "reported by a chronicler³" or modern historian?

¹ Carpenter, *Bible in XIXth Cent.*, pp. 419 f.

² Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 51.

³ von Soden, *Early Christ. Literature*, p. 418.

To begin with. It has, after all, some value as a narrative. We allow, as we cannot but allow, its extreme subjectivity; at the same time we are not prepared to rule it entirely out as a source for the life of Jesus. That it must be read with caution, discrimination, is obvious; at the same time it may well be believed that actual, and very precious, sayings of Jesus are really enshrined in it, and that it does enable us to catch glimpses—if through much that dazzles us—of that most holy life which was lived among men.

Again. The Fourth Gospel is a wonderful revelation of the stupendous impression made by Jesus on a human mind. "This Evangelist, so every single line of his writing tells us, has, through Jesus, found God, and the finding of God has meant life for him, fullest satisfaction; whatever he makes Jesus say is at the bottom a full and joyful confession of what Jesus has become to himself." Thus Wernle¹:—we may not, perhaps, go all the way with him in his explanations of sayings placed by the Fourth Evangelist in the mouth of Jesus; at least we may do ample justice to his recognition of the mighty personality of Jesus. Perhaps we go on to ask: could such stupendous

¹ Wernle, *Die Quellen &c.*, p. 29. Cf. Drummond, *Character and Authorship &c.*, p. 428: "If we do not learn from him the very words which Jesus spoke, we learn what he said to a sensitive and loving heart."

impression have been made by one who was but greatest among prophets, religious genius, hero of love and of sublimest trust in God¹? We are disposed to doubt it—and the doubt becomes intensified as we dwell on a mighty influence exerted, not only on that “greatest of disciples” in ancient times, but on the world’s life through centuries by the “strong Son of God.”

Once more. Truly this Gospel of “tender and unearthly beauty” responds “with timeless voice to the permanent needs of man.” It contains rich store of “comfortable (strengthening) words” which constrain the genuine believer to live out in himself that which he discerns in the person of the Lord Christ. It is full of suggestiveness for our own age—for ages yet to come. It has its salutary warnings for us. It bids us strive to find the common ground; to be ever eager to clasp hands of brotherhood with those who are in different camps. It tells us to be as the wise householder who will ever bring things new as well as old out of his treasure-house; to enter into and assimilate all new knowledge. It prompts us to look forward with faith to the future; is it not a Gospel of “the larger hope”?

It has its warnings for us. The remark has been made²: in all that relates to externals, to ceremonial

¹ Cf. Barth, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 44.

² By a friend of the present writer.

observance, the barometer has been steadily rising ; it has been as steadily falling in all that relates to heart-religion, to the spiritual life, to character and conduct. Not for a single moment would we undervalue the use of that which appeals to the senses and the emotions, nor are we quite so certain that nowhere does Jesus Himself attach any value "to outward means and forms¹." There remains deep need to be pointed away from mere externalism in religion²; and here the Fourth Gospel has this great word for us: "God is spirit, and they that worship must worship in spirit and in truth."

It points to unity. These are days when "the problem of the reunion of English Christianity" lies as a burden on the heart, and when the thought rises in many reflective minds that "the old distinctions between the several denominations no longer correspond with the vital affinities which draw men of kindred faith and purpose together³." Wisdom will dictate the *festina lente*, there is need of caution, if movement be slow it will be all the more sure, a true coming-together will scarcely be brought about by the sinking of principle on either side. That which is to be aimed at and accomplished—unity rather than uniformity—is

¹ Bousset, *Jesus*, pp. 51 f.

² Cf. von Soden, *Early Christian Literature*, p. 456.

³ Turbeville, *Steps towards Christian Unity*, p. 17. The book is one which deserves careful and sympathetic perusal.

brought full in view by this Fourth Gospel with its reference (by implication) to the many folds, the one flock.

It bids us enter heart and soul into the New Learning of our age. Well has it been said of the Johannine writings that "they rendered an extraordinary service to their time by absorbing into Christianity, as they did, every element in the great spiritual tendencies of the age that was capable of being assimilated¹"; and a demand is surely made that the like service should be rendered now. If the Fourth Evangelist be indeed revealed to us as one who has not scrupled to draw water from the well of Greek philosophy, he will surely have us follow where he has led the way. We may learn from him to recognise the truths which underlie the non-Christian religions of the world, each one of them a "broken light" of the Eternal. The revelations of physical science must be accounted helps to a fuller understanding of the divine processes. The intellectual and spiritual riches of the nations must be made to contribute to every effort made to "ring in the Christ that is to be."

It uplifts us with the buoyancy of hope. We have spoken of it as a Gospel of "the larger hope," and why?—because of that universalism which is one of its characteristic features. We are made to anticipate a time when humanity shall have been compacted to-

¹ Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, II. 2558.

gether into the "full-grown man" of St Paul's imaginings. For is it not written: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men, all things, to myself"?

There is uncertainty as to who the Fourth Evangelist really is¹. That what he gives us in his "noble work" is not history in the modern sense of the word cannot be gainsaid. But we may say this of him: he is verily one who has "made ready his soul, as some well-fashioned and jewelled lyre with strings of gold, and yielded it for the utterance of something great and sublime to the Spirit²."

¹ Grill (*Untersuchungen &c.*, p. vi.) says: "ich glaube er wollte und wird unbekannt bleiben." Gutjahr (*Die Glaubwürdigkeit &c.*, pp. 183 f.) had previously remarked: "Oder aber wusste der Verfasser des Evglms. das Geheimnis seiner Abfassung vor jedermann zu wahren? Konnte er es wenn er es wollte, auch am Orte wo er schrieb?" The question *may be* of a secret never to be disclosed.

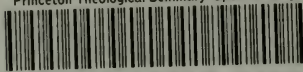
² Chrysostom, *Homilies on St John*, I.



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